

Arthurian and Courtly Cultures



GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
AND THE TRANSLATION
OF FEMALE KINGSHIP

FIONA TOLHURST



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GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH AND THE
TRANSLATION OF FEMALE KINGSHIP

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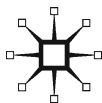
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*For
Maureen Fries*

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AUC</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita</i> with an English translation by B. O. Foster, volume 1: Books 1 and 2, 13 vols. (London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924)
<i>CM</i>	Matthew Paris, <i>Chronica majora</i> , ed. Henry Richards Luard, 7 vols., Rolls Series 57 (London: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1964)
<i>DEB</i>	Gildas, <i>De excidio Britonum and Other Works</i> , ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (London and Chichester: Phillimore; Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978)
<i>EWB</i>	Henry of Huntingdon, "Epistola Warino Britoni," in <i>Historia Anglorum</i> , ed. and trans. Diana Greenway, Book viii, pp. 558–83 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
<i>FV</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 2: The First Variant Version, a Critical Edition</i> , ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1988)
<i>GS</i>	<i>Gesta Stephani</i> , ed. and trans. K. R. Potter with a new introduction and notes by R. H. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976)
<i>HB</i>	<i>Historia Brittonum</i> , published as <i>Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals</i> , ed. and trans. John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore; Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980)
<i>HE</i>	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> , ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; repr. 1992)
<i>HN</i>	William of Malmesbury, <i>Historia novella</i> , ed. Edmund King and trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
<i>HRB</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum</i> , ed. Michael

- D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2007)
- HRB Bern* Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 1: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1984)
- LB* Laȝamon, *Laȝamon Brut or Hystoria Brutonum*, ed. and trans. with textual notes and commentary by W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Essex: Longman, 1995)
- RB* Wace, *Wace's roman de Brut: A History of the British, Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, revised edition (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002)

INTRODUCTION

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH AND THE TRANSLATION OF FEMALE KINGSHIP

Although feminist critics are producing readings of an increasing number and ever-widening variety of medieval texts, no feminist critic has analyzed the full range of female figures present in Geoffrey of Monmouth's two extant works: the *Historia regum Britanniae*, an account of early British history that he completed shortly before fellow historian Henry of Huntingdon discovered a copy of it in January 1139, and the *Vita Merlini*, an Arthurian poem that Geoffrey completed in about 1150.¹ In this volume, I offer a feminist-historicist analysis of the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* that complements the analysis I have already published in its companion volume, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*.²

In my study of the Arthurian section of *The History of the Kings of Britain* and the *Life of Merlin*, I argue that these two works provided feminist points of origin for the Arthurian tradition of medieval England. In Geoffrey's Arthurian section, Arturus's father and uncle embody an ideal of nurturing kingship that provides the philosophical basis for an account of the past in which Uther and Igera function as partners in love and power. Furthermore, the relationship of Arturus and Ganhumara functions in a similar manner, causing the Arthurian celebration at Caerleon to resemble Empress Matilda's coronation as Holy Roman Empress and Ganhumara to be a victim of Modredus's treason rather than a villain. When Geoffrey presents Helena, kidnap victim of the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel, and her nursemaid, both female figures take on a heroic dimension. Through the process of translation, however, Wace and Laȝamon displace Geoffrey's secular and feminist account of the Arthurian past with ecclesiastical and misogynist ones. First Wace erodes the significance of Arturus's mother Igera and his sister Anna, glorifies but finally villainizes Ganhumara, and transforms Helena and her nursemaid

into victims. Then Laȝamon problematizes Igerna, marginalizes Anna, and both marginalizes and demonizes Ganhumara. In addition, the English poet denies to Helena and her nursemaid the status of hero as he reasserts and celebrates a masculinist ideal of heroism. Confirming Geoffrey's status as a medieval author with feminist sympathies are two additional feminist points of origin for the Arthurian tradition that *The Life of Merlin* provides: Morgen the enchantress and Ganiada the prophet. Geoffrey's poem encourages readers to view Merlinus's actions from the perspective of his wife Guendoloena and sister Ganiada, praises Ganiada for cleverness when she uses trickery to obscure her adultery, transforms a widowed Ganiada into a female prophet whose voice finally replaces the voices of both Merlinus and Geoffrey himself, and ends with women in positions of power: Morgen reigns over Avalon while Ganiada, as spiritual royalty, reigns over Britain. In the chapters that follow, I offer a feminist-historicist analysis of the female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*—the portion that most general readers and a good many scholars ignore.

The possibility of a feminist interpretation of the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* has existed for nearly seventy-five years, for several scholars have noted the significance of the female figures that cause this work of historiography to depart from medieval norms of recording the past. In 1938, Arthurian literature specialist J. S. P. Tatlock asserted that Geoffrey's creation of the 'biographies' of several female rulers of early Britain constituted support for the claim of Empress Matilda to the English throne.³ In a 1950 monograph on *The History of the Kings of Britain* and related texts, Tatlock then reasserted his conclusion that there was a probable connection between Empress Matilda's position as the designated heir to the throne of her father, King Henry I, and the twelfth-century historian's creation and positive presentation of a number of female rulers.⁴ When historian Antonia Gransden discussed Geoffrey of Monmouth in her 1974 study of medieval historiography, she identified Geoffrey as "a supporter of the Empress Matilda" who "praises women rulers" and presents them as wielding power successfully, but she highlighted Igerna and Ganhumara as "the objects of men's love" whose "beauty leads men to illicit passion" rather than the female characters who function as kings.⁵

Perhaps because Gransden dismissed rather than celebrated Geoffrey's historiographical achievement, it was not until 1993 that Arthurian literature specialists Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke cited Gransden's remarks about "Geoffrey's partisan support for Matilda's claim" in order to emphasize the connection between Geoffrey's creation of female rulers and the historical moment at which he wrote his account of early Britain: "The presence of so many prominent women

in the *Historia*—and Geoffrey’s praise of those women—serve to create a precedent for the woman ruler.”⁶ However, Shichtman and Finke’s assertion, like Tatlock’s, met with a conservative reaction. In a 2002 article, medieval romance specialist Laura D. Barefield noted that Geoffrey’s female figures Innogin, Iudon, and Tonwenna demonstrate “the persistence and power of cognatic connections for the kings of Britain”; nevertheless, Barefield undermined the concept of female rule by concluding that Geoffrey’s history has a “narrative structure” that “naturalizes and embeds patriarchy and the assumptions concerning gender it brings.”⁷ In this way, Barefield dismissed the ideal of female kingship that *The History of the Kings of Britain* presents so positively.

These sporadic observations about Galfridian females have yet to yield a reading of the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* from a feminist perspective for two main reasons. One is that specialists in Galfridian studies have only recently had access to the work of historians who are revising the standard account of King Stephen’s disputed reign to include the Empress Matilda as something other than a problematic female. The other is that analyses of Geoffrey’s history often give female figures only passing mention, concluding that Galfridian females reinforce patriarchal values without noting how this historian’s treatment of female figures differs from that of both his predecessors in historiography and his redactors and translators. The dearth of work on Galfridian females other than Ganhumara contrasts sharply with Malorians’ steady production of analyses of both female figures and gender issues, as well as with the growing amount of similar work on the English and Continental romances that predate Malory’s *Morte Darthur*.⁸ Detailed analysis of the many female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, their relationships with male figures, and their differences from the female figures in texts related to Geoffrey’s history constitute an essential—but until now absent—vantage point from which to re-view Geoffrey of Monmouth’s contribution to the historiographical tradition of medieval England. The chapters that follow document the uniqueness of this contribution in order to argue that Geoffrey of Monmouth should not remain on the margins of scholarly discourse about medieval historiography.

The Important, Yet Still Marginal, *History of the Kings of Britain*

There is a strong consensus among scholars that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* was one of the most popular and influential texts in medieval Europe. In contrast to medieval English texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Beowulf* that are well known today

but survive in a single manuscript, Geoffrey's history survives in over two hundred manuscripts, nearly sixty of which were produced during the twelfth century; it was a medieval best seller that, according to historiography specialist Francis Ingledew, was "in some sense *the* exemplary historiographical work of the Middle Ages."⁹ Given that the entire corpus of texts written in English and French between 1075 and 1225 survives in fewer manuscripts than does Geoffrey's history, it is clear that this version of the British past circulated widely and was a significant cultural force.¹⁰ Its popularity resulted from its offering two types of information previously unavailable to twelfth-century readers in England: a complete account of events in Britain before the Germanic tribes, now referred to as the Anglo-Saxons, gained control of the island, and the first full 'biography' of the legendary King Arthur. By the end of the twelfth century, this popularity had had a palpable effect: neither historians nor translators of Geoffrey's book were concerning themselves with how its dubious revisionist history clashed with the orthodox account, the one that Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* had established and William of Malmesbury had helped to develop.¹¹

By the fourteenth century, *The History of the Kings of Britain* had as much authority as the orthodox account; moreover, from that time onward, Geoffrey's version of the first seven hundred years of the Christian era predominated over Bede's with the results that both King Edward I and King Edward III could use Arthurian pageantry to enhance their power, and political prophecy—much of it linked with Merlin's name—became a popular genre.¹² The longest-lasting cultural product of Geoffrey's history, however, was the Trojan foundation myth for Britain. This myth provided the means for many aristocratic families to establish their identities as well as precedents for conquest that kings including Edward I, Edward III, and Henry VI used to claim sovereignty for England and to pursue what Middle English literature specialist George R. Keiser calls "imperial ambitions."¹³ The myth of British sovereignty with its origin in Aeneas's great-grandson Brutus was so attractive that, despite frequent objections to it, it "still had its champions into the eighteenth century."¹⁴ Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* was, for hundreds of years, the most important of the insular histories because its mythical kings enabled real kings to acquire territory.

In addition to providing an account of the past whose political utility enabled it to displace mainstream historiography for hundreds of years, Geoffrey's history provided a point of origin for two literary genres that remained popular throughout the Middle Ages: political prophecy and romance. The *Prophetiae Merlini* section of *The History of the Kings of Britain* (a long digression in which Merlinus presents a vision of Britain's future

using animal imagery) remained so popular throughout the Middle Ages that, according to historians Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, “to Geoffrey and this work of his goes the credit of popularising vaticinal literature in England.”¹⁵ Although the eighty-five extant manuscripts that preserve *The Prophecies of Merlin* as a discrete text testify to its popularity, its cultural power derived from more than mere popularity, for both Latin redactors and Anglo-Norman translators treated “Merlin’s text . . . as sacred.”¹⁶ For example, the redactor who wrote what is now known as the First Variant version of Geoffrey’s history chose not to modify the Vulgate text’s prophecies in any way, and those who translated them into Anglo-Norman French retained “the great majority of the main characters and descriptions.”¹⁷ The fact that Wace’s omission of *The Prophecies of Merlin* from his Anglo-Norman verse translation of Geoffrey’s history did not prevent redactors from reinserting them into *roman de Brut* manuscripts offers further evidence that medieval scholars treated the vaticinal material as a sacred text.¹⁸ Galfridian specialist Julia Crick has noted that, because the prophetic section of Geoffrey’s history was treated “with a reverence almost accorded to scripture,” it was “the first non-biblical prophetic text to sustain an exegetical tradition.”¹⁹

Although Geoffrey’s contribution to the development of the genre of political prophecy makes *The History of the Kings of Britain* an important historiographical work, his contribution to the development of the romance tradition makes it an important literary work as well. By interpolating into his usually brief descriptions of the reigns of over one hundred British monarchs episodes involving romantic relationships, battles against exotic opponents, and mysterious prophecies, Geoffrey offers one of the earliest examples in England of what Arthurian literature specialist Ad Putter calls “mak[ing] way for romance.”²⁰ Furthermore, Geoffrey’s meaningful inclusion of what critics now call romance elements demonstrates a point that French literature specialist Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner has made about twelfth-century fiction written in French: that “romance fictions thus allow a kind of free space for experiments—in forms and ideas—that may function as a way to redirect and change the society it mirrors.”²¹ One such experiment in form is the *Prophecies of Merlin* section, for it anticipates similar digressions in romances such as the stories of sacred objects that interrupt the knights’ adventures in the thirteenth-century prose romance *La queste del Saint Graal*.²² Elsewhere in the non-Arthurian portion of his history, however, Geoffrey offers an experiment in ideas by presenting female kingship as a desirable alternative to rule by males, an experiment which (as will become clear in chapters 1 and 2 of this volume) both “mirrors” events of his day and attempts to “redirect” the political future of Norman-controlled England.

Despite its influence upon the development of both historiography and Arthurian literature in medieval England, *The History of the Kings of Britain* remains a marginal text within the field of medieval studies whose treatment tends to be either negative or cursory. Among historians, the book is generally considered a non-history, one which proves its author to be a liar. Gransden offers an often-cited and particularly harsh assessment of Geoffrey of Monmouth, asserting that he was “a romance writer masquerading as a historian” who “was capable of intellectual dishonesty” and “unlike the reputable historians of the day . . . had no moral, edificatory purpose, and no interest in recording historical facts.”²³ Although fellow historian Christopher Brooke is more moderate in his criticism, he still comments scoffingly, “that there has scarcely, if ever, been a historian more mendacious than Geoffrey of Monmouth” and that Geoffrey’s epilogue “expresses the daring of a man who cannot believe that he will continue to be taken seriously.”²⁴

Some literary critics give *The History of the Kings of Britain* serious consideration, but they tend to study only its Arthurian section. Based on factors such as the Arthurian section’s particular “ideological force” or its strong influence upon “the developing romance genre,” these critics justify the isolation of one-quarter of a sweeping narrative that spans the years 1100 BC to AD 689.²⁵ The unfortunate result of the privileging of the Arthurian section is that Geoffrey’s book becomes a framing device for studies centered on other works. For example, Latin literature specialist Siân Echard uses Geoffrey’s history as the starting point and his *Life of Merlin* as the endpoint of a detailed exploration of several Arthurian works written in Latin during the twelfth century, but her focus is on these lesser-known works rather than on Geoffrey’s book. Furthermore, because Echard discusses only the Arthurian section of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, she can assert but not develop the argument that Geoffrey’s “attention to the overall structure of his work” is what distinguishes him most strongly from other historians of his day.²⁶ Race theory and feminist critic Geraldine Heng focuses her analysis of Geoffrey’s history even more narrowly. In a lengthy chapter, she discusses just one episode in the Arthurian section—that of Arturus’s battle against the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel—and develops her interpretation of it by relating it to the one episode in the non-Arthurian portion of the book that involves an instance of cannibalism. Although Heng’s analysis links Geoffrey’s history with a wealth of information about the Crusades, her interpretation of the Arthurian section of *The History of the Kings of Britain* involves a single episode to which she allots less than six pages of space, no more than she allots to the non-Arthurian story of King Caduallo’s cannibalism.²⁷ The brief discussions in Heng’s book of the *Prophecies of*

Merlin section and some Arthurian details do not alter the fact that her interpretation of Geoffrey of Monmouth takes selective reading to an extreme.²⁸

Readers interested in Geoffrey's treatment of female figures quickly discover that Galfridian females, with the exception of Ganhumara, occupy a marginal position not only within literary studies and medieval studies in general but also within Arthurian studies in particular.²⁹ Taking William Shakespeare's well-known character Cordelia as an example, introductions to *King Lear* tend to acknowledge that Geoffrey of Monmouth created this character yet fail to note what makes Geoffrey's Cordeilla interesting: she is a full participant in political events who inherits the throne from her father and reigns as a female king, not a victim of circumstance who is murdered in prison before her rescuers can arrive.³⁰ Among medievalists, the contexts within which literature specialists study Geoffrey often preclude consideration of female figures. For example, investigations of Geoffrey's possible parody and (through parody) subversion of either the genre of historiography or the high status of monks and canons regular leads to a focus on male writers and their use of Latin.³¹ Inquiries into Geoffrey's relationship to the tradition of Christian historiography and his text's possible ethnic bias (whether pro-Norman, anti-Norman, pro-Welsh, or pro-Breton) likewise preclude consideration of female figures.³² Even the interpretive contexts within which Arthurian specialists have studied Geoffrey's history tend to focus scholarly attention on male figures. Both Maureen Fries's Boethian analysis of Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Susan M. Schwartz's Augustinian analysis of it focus exclusively on male rulers, and the only female figure Schwartz mentions is Ronwein as the sin-inducing object of King Vorteginus's desire.³³

The tendency among medievalists to marginalize Galfridian females is strong even when their critical approaches could facilitate the exploration of links between the historical moment at which Empress Matilda was asserting her right to the English throne and a history dedicated to her strongest supporter, Robert of Gloucester. Historicist, postcolonialist, and gender studies critics have all given Galfridian females cursory treatment. Historicist critic Stephen Knight, in a chapter on *The History of the Kings of Britain*, mentions only two of the female figures that Geoffrey includes in the non-Arthurian portion of the text. One is the daughter of Seginus, duke of the Allobroges. She merits a passing mention because Brennius (who eventually becomes co-conqueror of Rome) marries her.³⁴ The other is Cordeilla who receives a little more attention because Knight interprets her as "a sentimentally euphemised version of Henry I," who, like King Henry, reigns despite having two

older siblings; however, Knight seems to include her primarily so that he can underscore the “doubts about women rulers” that Cordeilla’s nephews raise and thereby dismiss Empress Matilda as a king-candidate.³⁵ In a study of responses to Geoffrey’s history in Welsh, English, and French, postcolonialist critic Michelle R. Warren includes female figures in a similarly minimal and unnuanced way. Warren mentions, rather than discusses, several of them: Innogin as the Greek and conquered half of Brutus’s marriage, Habren as the German-Briton daughter of Locrinus whose execution gives a name to the river that forms the boundary of Guendoloena’s realm, Guendoloena as the committer of two “homosocial murders,” the British women who drown or are murdered before they reach Armorica as the potential means of preserving the purity of their people’s bloodline, Helena as the potential rape victim and her nurse as the actual rape victim of the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel, Gewissa as the woman whose marriage results in the building of Gloucester at the site of Habren’s death, and Ronwein as the foreign woman who inspires such desire in King Vortegirinus that “he plays the role of the colonized native.”³⁶ Given Warren’s focus on the ambiguities of Geoffrey’s text, it is noteworthy that she neatly categorizes Galfridian females: they are either powerless victims or powerful aggressors who kill or seduce.

In *Of Giants*, postcolonialist and gender studies critic Jeffrey Jerome Cohen gives Geoffrey’s history prominence by making the battle between Arturus and the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel an analytical touchstone throughout his exploration of the masculinities present in medieval texts, but his presentation of Geoffrey’s female figures is both minimal and almost entirely negative.³⁷ Helena (who appears in the Arthurian section of Geoffrey’s history) receives sympathetic treatment in three separate mentions, but only as the giant’s victim, while the contention that “no secure place existed for women and mothers within the narratives of nation building connected to the Trojan diaspora” necessitates defining Geoffrey’s non-Arthurian females as helpless victims and in negative terms.³⁸ In a single passage, Cohen dismisses six characters in rapid succession: Innogin is forced into her marriage with Brutus and her body enters the narrative “only to provide a source for children”; Guendoloena “abdicates” the British throne when her son reaches his majority; Cordeilla suffers deposition at the hands of nephews who object to female rule; Igera produces two children after being “tricked into sleeping with Uther”; Merlinus’s mother produces her son as a result of an incubus’s deception; and Ganhumara participates in the Caerleon celebrations but dines “segregated from the men” and finally becomes a nun—after proving to be an infertile adulteress.³⁹ Although Cohen mentions Guendoloena’s fifteen-year reign and Ganhumara’s “role in her

husband's plenary court," he attributes to Geoffrey's female figures only minor and negative roles.⁴⁰ Given the consistent marginalization that Geoffrey's female figures receive, to produce a systematic and nuanced analysis of the many female figures that appear in *The History of the Kings of Britain* requires employing a different methodology.

Reading Geoffrey's History from a Feminist-Historicist Perspective

A feminist-historicist approach to *The History of the Kings of Britain* is an obvious choice given that Geoffrey of Monmouth completed it when Empress Matilda was about to take military action in order to acquire the English throne that she had inherited from her father King Henry I and, in response to this historical moment, chose to create female figures that play varied and mostly positive roles. Nevertheless, such a methodology emerges as the best one possible once readers recognize that Geoffrey creates a past for the Britons that provides ample precedent for Matilda's reign and reinforces the idea of legitimate succession, regardless of the successor's gender. More specifically, Geoffrey presents female rule in early Britain as a viable and beneficial alternative to rule by males, assigns more varied roles to female figures than do his predecessors and successors in insular historiography, praises females who participate actively in political events, and criticizes males who refuse to honor the rights of monarchs worthy of the label 'female king,' a term I borrow from historian Charles Beem.⁴¹ Identifying this study as feminist-historicist in its approach does not, however, adequately define its methodology, for both historicist and feminist methodologies vary.

Therefore, I should explain that the chapters that follow employ both traditional historicist and New Historicist methods of textual analysis. They emulate traditional historicist practice by offering a reading of the entire non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey's history that is grounded in the historical moment of the text's completion, thereby avoiding the kind of distortion of meaning that can occur when too much interpretive weight is given to one particular character or event that appears in this carefully constructed version of the British past.⁴² Nevertheless, these chapters depart from previous historicist investigations of Geoffrey's book in focusing on patterns of connection both among female characters in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* and between them and the male characters. Through a non-Arthurian focus, I avoid replicating the problematic practice of interpreting the whole book in light of the Arthurian section along with the common outcome of that practice: linking all female figures to a supposedly

corrupt and sinful Queen Ganhumara. These chapters also draw upon New Historicist methodology in that they are more concerned with how various texts illuminate one another than with source study. In addition, like much New Historicist work, they offer close readings of both historical and literary texts: modern histories that discuss Empress Matilda and her Norman contemporaries, medieval histories closely related to Geoffrey's, and the poems that resulted when Wace translated Geoffrey's history into Anglo-Norman French and then Laȝamon translated Wace's French poem into Middle English. Finally, by labeling my methodology as feminist-historicist, I try to make my interests and biases evident. I do so because historicism, like any other act of textual interpretation, can neither be an objective, "disinterested project" nor neatly separate "external and internal evidence."⁴³

Like its companion volume *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, this study builds upon Fries's often-cited method of categorizing female figures in the Arthurian tradition.⁴⁴ According to Fries, heroines are "conservative, passive, instrumental non-actors, useful for provoking, renewing and rewarding the actions of their knight-agents"; female heroes "may, indirectly and for a specified time, consciously play female parts to effect transformation of their male-dominant world, but...always act only for knightly benefit"; and female counter-heroes "openly refuse to be seen in womanly supportive roles in what is essentially a male drama and attempt to change their woman-hostile world by direct and not indirect action"—action that is "often in their own interest" rather than in the interest of males.⁴⁵ However, I add to this schema the categories of female king and female king-candidate in order to describe accurately Geoffrey's presentation of female figures. I also offer an alternate definition of female heroism that compensates for two assumptions on Fries's part that limit her schema's utility: that the roles of king and hero (in the traditional, male sense) are off-limits to females, and that females can neither permanently transform their male-dominant world nor act in their own interest without becoming dangerous or destructive to males. Galfridian females can possess some of the traits of a male hero and can benefit Britain by acting in their own interest.

Because Geoffrey's history presents such a variety of female roles, it exceeds Fries's schema. It therefore corroborates historian Joan Cadden's conclusion that "there is no coherent set of concepts that can be said to constitute the medieval gender framework."⁴⁶ As a result, readers must explore the plurality of gender frameworks present in medieval texts. In order to explore Geoffrey's construction of gender roles, I allow the individual cases of female figures to form patterns rather than force them

into predetermined categories. This practice honors historian Judith M. Bennett's guidelines for feminist medievalists: to offer new perspectives on the medieval period without allowing feminist values to determine either what they find or how they describe those findings.⁴⁷

In this volume, I continue to work within the tradition of Anglo-American images of women scholarship but with a methodological twist: I use the word 'feminist' to describe Geoffrey of Monmouth's history. I offer comparative analysis of the female figures in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* and their counterparts in the historical and literary texts most closely related to this often-ignored portion of the book, treating the language of these texts from a structuralist perspective because their medieval authors conceive of language as referring to extratextual realities.⁴⁸ Moreover, because I share historian Nancy F. Partner's discomfort with Foucaultian social constructivism that defines women as passive recipients of "patriarchal discourses," I provide a framework for my literary analysis by re-reading Empress Matilda as an active participant in English history who deserves a place among the kings of England.⁴⁹ I then explore how the words and deeds of Galfridian females change the course of British history, as Geoffrey reconstructs it. By focusing on how female figures shape readers' perceptions of male figures rather than the other way around, I argue that Geoffrey of Monmouth is a male writer of the medieval period who produced an account of the past worthy of the label 'feminist' if that term is defined in a period-specific way.

As I have previously demonstrated, using the word 'feminist' to set a particular medieval text apart from the antifeminist tradition of the Middle Ages is both useful and necessary if readers are to move beyond the assumptions that progressive voices regarding women's capabilities are more likely to be female than male, and more likely to appear later in the medieval period than earlier.⁵⁰ Although Middle English literature specialists Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson articulate the view that "'feminism' is not an historically portable term," my own view is that the word 'feminist' is "portable" if used with caution and common sense.⁵¹ Instead of attempting to label medieval authors as 'feminist' in the modern sense of the word, readers can use the word in a medieval sense to draw attention to texts that do not conform to the norms of an antifeminist tradition that articulated and encouraged misogynist attitudes during the Middle Ages.

Although using the word 'feminist' in this way might seem to be a radical step, it is a practical solution to a problem that all feminist critics encounter: how to define a term that has a range of meaning indicative of the variety of generational, cultural, and political biases that affect

how people use it—whether they work inside or outside of academe. Furthermore, to use the word ‘feminist’ (the word I call the other f-word because of the ideological battles its use incites) in this specific way provides a means of labeling medieval texts that are pro-female without resorting to highly problematic alternatives. One alternative is to use the term ‘proto-feminist’ or ‘pre-feminist,’ but to do so reinforces the tendency within academe to find value in a text that is chronologically medieval only if it anticipates a later genre, idea, or movement. To use either of these terms not only reinforces a pro-modern bias that encourages the dismissal of medieval texts but also risks eliding the differences in historical context that make what scholars label ‘medieval’ different from what they label ‘early modern’ in order to make medieval texts seem more relevant today.

Another alternative is to use the term ‘profeminine,’ one that Alcuin Blamires has demonstrated to have utility as a descriptor of medieval defenses of women.⁵² This term, however, cannot be applied to a medieval text in which female characters take on male roles. In addition, ‘profeminine’ is a term incompatible with the current project because it connotes the praise of traditionally feminine qualities. Furthermore, using the word ‘feminist’ in a medieval sense avoids the methodological trap of trying to push the feminist movement’s point of origin back into the Middle Ages, as historian Joan Kelly tried to do when arguing that Christine de Pizan was an early feminist.⁵³ Because Geoffrey’s female figures—like his most prominent male kings—display a combination of masculine and feminine qualities without receiving blame for crossing the line between traditional and nontraditional gender roles, a period-specific use of ‘feminist’ is the most reasonable option available. The common use of the word ‘antifeminist’ within medieval studies to encompass a wide range of expressions of female inferiority likewise encourages the use of the word ‘feminist’ with a ‘medieval’ meaning.

As in *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, I use the word ‘feminist’ in this book to signal that Geoffrey of Monmouth departs from the antifeminist tradition of the Middle Ages. My use of the term, therefore, does not constitute any of the following anachronistic claims: that Geoffrey of Monmouth participated in a women’s rights movement resembling the modern one, thought of himself as a ‘feminist’ in relation to other medieval historians, or held particular beliefs about women’s nature or gender roles. It is simply an imperfect but practical means of underscoring how fundamentally Geoffrey’s treatment of female figures in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain* differs from that of the authors who wrote the historical and literary texts related to his book. Although texts can be misogynist

to varying degrees and in different ways, the term ‘misogynist’ will be applied to texts that treat female figures dismissively and negatively while the term ‘feminist’ will be applied to Geoffrey’s history because it treats female figures respectfully and positively.

It would certainly be inaccurate to claim that Galfridian historiography is itself feminist if the term ‘historiography’ is understood to include all aspects of Geoffrey’s approach to the work of writing history. Nowhere in his book does Geoffrey either explicitly reject the idea that history consists mainly of the deeds of males or articulate a personal approach to historiography that is explicitly revisionist: he merely expresses a desire to correct the historical record by providing information about the deeds both of the British kings who lived before Christ and of Arturus and his successors (1.1–2.7). Nevertheless, what Geoffrey offers is a revised version of the British past that displays what readers will recognize as feminist sympathies, for it presents positive images of female figures performing a variety of functions—including the authoritative function of female king. Geoffrey is unique among medieval historians in both creating and giving pivotal positions to female figures that possess attributes and play roles that are mostly positive. Although he does not address the question of woman’s nature polemically, Geoffrey’s treatment of female figures provides a sharp contrast to the vast majority of writers of medieval histories and romances who define what is “foreign” as “that which is deficient and (by a familiar leap of logic) that which is feminine.”⁵⁴

In fact, Geoffrey often presents male figures as deficient and men’s deeds as requiring female guidance and correction. Furthermore, by refusing to brand female action as exceptional, females’ crimes as somehow typical of their gender, or females’ wielding of power as either destabilizing or damaging to early British society, Geoffrey of Monmouth offers what for his time is a feminist version of gender relations. More specifically, his history presents female figures as full participants in, rather than as mere footnotes to, the stories of British rulers he creates; presents women as possessing—and capable of exercising—political and social power; and treats women as men’s moral equals or superiors. It also creates female figures that subvert traditional gender roles in two ways: some fulfill functions other than those of wife, mother, widow, nun, and queen consort while others fulfill traditional functions in unusual ways.

Chapter Overview

This study departs from the long-standing tradition within Galfridian studies of ignoring, dismissing, or demonizing the female figures that

appear in Geoffrey's history by providing a feminist re-reading of the historical moment that produced the text, the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, and the redactions and translations that distorted and displaced Geoffrey's account of the British past. This re-reading is grounded in the principle that Geoffrey's composition of his book at the historical moment at which female kingship was about to become a reality in Norman-controlled England provides the most useful means of accounting for the varied and mostly positive contributions of the female figures in his history. The title *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship* reflects this re-reading's central concern with the translation of Empress Matilda's kingship, understood in three senses: how both medieval and modern historians tend to remove Matilda from the position of female king and relegate her to the margins of historiography, how Geoffrey of Monmouth translates the idea of Empress Matilda's reign as king of England into a female-inclusive principle of kingship expressed through a fictional set of competent and moral female rulers who contrast with their often incompetent and immoral male counterparts, and how Geoffrey's redactors turn his Latin prose account into variant versions and his translators turn it into new narratives—all of which either undermine or erase the concept of female kingship.

Taking advantage of the 2007 publication of a reliable edition of Geoffrey's history, I compare *The History of the Kings of Britain* to several related histories as well as to its early translations by Wace and Laȝamon in order to complete my project of demonstrating the aspect of Geoffrey of Monmouth's extant works most worthy of readers' attention: his creation and positive presentation of female figures that exercise political, social, and spiritual power.⁵⁵ While both Ganieda and Morgen in *The Life of Merlin* demonstrate Geoffrey's positive presentation of women exercising spiritual power, the non-Arthurian portion of his history demonstrates his positive presentation of women exercising political and social power. Using the non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey's history as the base text for detailed comparative analysis of the female figures present in texts related to it, I argue that Geoffrey of Monmouth is a feminist historian of the Middle Ages who deserves a more prominent position in both literary and historical studies than he currently occupies because he creates an alternate version of British history in which female figures play active and mostly positive roles, and he narrates his account from a secular, usually nonjudgmental, and pro-female perspective.

Chapter 1, "Re-reading Empress Matilda as a Female King," reevaluates the significance of Empress Matilda as a historical figure in order to bring her in from her usual position on the margins of historiography. Drawing upon recent studies of this woman who usually remains a

footnote in accounts of Norman-controlled England, this chapter argues that Matilda not only fought during most of her cousin's reign for her right to rule but also became a female king—one who should be included in the standard genealogy of English monarchs. Highlighting the empress's more-than-ample qualifications for kingship and her possession of the English throne for several months, the chapter argues that Matilda deserves a more prominent place in English historiography than the one modern historians have traditionally assigned to her.

Chapter 2, "Geoffrey's History as Preparation for a Female King," repositions the history to which Geoffrey gave the name *De gestis Britonum* (*Concerning the Deeds of the Britons*) as a response to the historical moment at which Empress Matilda was preparing to wage war in order to gain the throne that was rightfully hers. It argues that Geoffrey's creation of fictional precedents for female kingship is consistent not only with the actual reigns of several women of the medieval period but also with King Henry I's careful preparation for his daughter's reign. This chapter re-reads Geoffrey's history from the perspective that the empress is the most likely inspiration for the positive portraits of female power that appear in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, and the chaotic infighting among the Norman barons the most likely inspiration for Geoffrey's critique of male brutality. First, it interprets the text in light of the several surviving versions of its dedication. Then, it positions the female figures in Geoffrey's history in relation to female figures in both its three main historiographical sources and the *Prophecies of Merlin* section, material which Geoffrey wrote before developing his account of early Britain but interpolated into it. Within this context, it examines the wide range of female figures in the non-Arthurian portion of the history: potential villains, apparent victims who turn out to be heroes, queen consorts, cofounders of royal bloodlines, female kings, and female king-candidates. Geoffrey's presentation of female kingship is, therefore, part of a larger program of creating a pro-female version of the British past.

Chapter 3, "Undermining and Degrading Female Kingship in the First Variant and Wace's *roman de Brut*," demonstrates how the First Variant version of *The History of the Kings of Britain* begins to undermine Geoffrey's positive presentation of female figures in general, and of female kingship in particular, by imposing ecclesiastical values on what was a secular and feminist history. As the Variant-redactor compresses and alters the stories of good Galfridian females in ways that decrease either their narrative or historical significance, he judges formerly neutral females more harshly than does his predecessor. Consequently, the redactor transforms potentially problematic female figures into villains.

The chapter then examines how Wace expands rather than condenses the Galfridian narrative of the British past, yet he produces results similar to those of the Variant-redactor. Although Wace honors Galfridian historiography by meaningfully including female figures in his *roman de Brut* and developing them into more fully rounded characters, he resembles the Variant-redactor in either purifying or villainizing Galfridian females. In apparent response to his personal bias against Empress Matilda, lack of interest in female rulers in general, and personal acquaintance with Matilda's son King Henry II, Wace complicates as well as develops Galfridian females. Although he purifies two female figures, he villainizes six of them. In addition, he translates female heroism into victimization and powerlessness as well as undermines female kingship by degrading both female kings and female king-candidates.

Chapter 4, "Delegitimizing and Erasing Female Kingship in the 'Epistola Warino Britoni,' the *Chronica majora*, and Laʒamon's *Brut*," argues that Geoffrey of Monmouth's redactors Henry of Huntingdon and Matthew Paris and his translator Laʒamon dismantle Geoffrey's female-friendly version of the British past by erasing and/or delegitimizing female kingship in their respective texts. Having learned of the existence of Geoffrey's history in January 1139, Henry of Huntingdon produced an epistolary summary of it in which he reinforces traditional gender roles by either reducing to footnote status, or simply eliminating, many of Geoffrey of Monmouth's female figures as well as omitting or transforming Geoffrey's female kings. Writing in the thirteenth century, Benedictine monk Matthew Paris undermined Galfridian historiography more aggressively than either the Variant-redactor or Henry of Huntingdon by altering Geoffrey's stories of female figures so that they reinforce traditional ideas about gender roles. More specifically, by relegating female figures to the margins of his narrative, he limits the scope of their roles and not only erases the reigns of Guendoloena and Marcia but also strips Empress Matilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine of political agency.

Translating Wace's *roman de Brut* while consulting Geoffrey's history, Laʒamon produced a narrative that undoes the pro-female cultural work that Geoffrey's history performs. As a narrator, Laʒamon dwells on and encourages his readers to enjoy the drama of violence against female characters, purifies the few truly good female figures he includes, demonizes and condemns the evil female figures he borrows from his French source, and systematically dismantles the powers that queen consorts and female kings possess in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. As a result, Laʒamon's *Brut* erases the reigns of Guendoloena and Marcia and delegitimizes that of Cordeilla.

This study aims to do what Bennett has identified as the work of feminism within medieval studies: “adding new information, answering old questions in new ways, and creating entirely new research agendas.”⁵⁶ It offers “new information” in the form of detailed analysis of female figures in the non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey’s history and several texts related to it. It answers the old question of “What value do the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth have?” in a new way by using female figures as the access point into Geoffrey’s well-known history. In addition, it creates a new research agenda: interpreting Geoffrey’s history through the interpretive lens of the non-Arthurian portion rather than through its Arthurian section. This feminist work participates in the growing trend within medieval studies of identifying premodern authors (male or female) who set themselves apart from the misogynist mainstream of their time, a trend typified by the work of Blamires who specializes in editing and interpreting medieval texts about women.⁵⁷

The chapters that follow reflect several decisions I have made in order to present my argument as clearly as possible. The first decision concerns translations. Because my interpretation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history is grounded in the close reading of his book and several texts associated with it, I have consulted standard translations but provide my own deliberately literal translations of all passages cited, with one exception. Because Judith Weiss’s translation of Wace’s *roman de Brut* is both eloquent and quite literal, I do not offer my own translations of passages from this text. I do, however, leave character names in their untranslated forms in order to reinforce the point that Wace’s characters differ from their Galfridian counterparts. The second decision concerns how I refer to Geoffrey’s history. To make this study accessible to as broad a readership as possible, I usually refer to it by its common name, *Historia regum Britanniae*, or the English equivalent of that name, *The History of the Kings of Britain*. However, at points in the analysis where it is useful to remember that the author gave his history a general and gender-neutral title, I use the name by which Geoffrey referred to it, *De gestis Britonum*, or its English equivalent, *Concerning the Deeds of the Britons*.⁵⁸ The third decision concerns how I refer to characters. In order to make the transformations that Galfridian characters undergo at the hands of redactors and translators easier to trace, I refer to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s characters using the Latinate names that their creator gave them and to the characters of his redactors and translators by the names they have in each particular text. I have also made two additional decisions intended to aid the reader: I use the English equivalents of the titles of Latin works after introducing them in each chapter, and I provide mostly in-text citations when developing comparative analysis.

CHAPTER 1

RE-READING EMPRESS MATILDA AS A FEMALE KING

Given the observation of Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke that “the historian’s knowledge of the past is always inextricably bound up with his or her investments in and anxieties about the present,” Geoffrey of Monmouth’s present—the historical moment at which King Henry I’s daughter and heir Empress Matilda was planning her military campaign to become king of England—is an appropriate starting point for gaining an understanding of the *Historia regum Britanniae*.¹ However, examining this book’s historical context is no more ‘neutral’ or ‘scientific’ a process than examining the book itself. In fact, as Lee Patterson has reminded his colleagues in both history and literary studies, no act of historicism “can or should be a disinterested project.”² From the perspective of feminist scholars, “the history of the history books” is a product of traditional scholarship that consists of narratives from which women are absent or in which women appear as mere footnotes to the deeds of men; consequently, in 1985, Beatrice Gottlieb asserted that “all history has to be rewritten.”³ Although the scholarship of the last quarter-century has substantially rewritten history to include women in meaningful ways, many female figures remain neglected.

A case in point is Empress Matilda who usually occupies a marginal position in modern historians’ accounts of English history, a position that demonstrates not only the impossibility of objectivity in historical study but also the way in which historians, like literary critics, tend to repeat views that are conventional within their field.⁴ Nevertheless, recent work on the period of King Stephen’s reign has made it possible to approach the historical moment at which Geoffrey composed and completed his history from a pro-Matilda angle.⁵ This chapter, therefore, offers a feminist re-reading of the career of Empress Matilda in order to establish the

context within which to interpret the many female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*. This re-reading grants Matilda what should be her rightful place in mainstream accounts of English history by bringing the empress in from the margins of historiography and positioning her at its center. It then interprets the available information about her deeds separate from the negative female stereotypes that have traditionally shaped, and continue to shape, how historians present her. This analysis lays the groundwork for three subsequent chapters that document how Geoffrey's secular, relatively nonjudgmental, and pro-female style of narration differs fundamentally from the way in which his fellow historians and early translators narrate the past.

It is useful to recall that Matilda's struggle to acquire and retain the English throne that was rightfully hers is one of many examples of contested succession between 1075 and 1225. During this century and a half of instability, the English crown was inherited by the eldest surviving son of the sitting king only twice: by Richard I from his father Henry II in 1189, and by the infant Henry III from his father John (brother of Richard I) in 1216.⁶ Within the context of nearly continuous contestation of monarchical power during this period, Matilda's assertion of her right to rule did not differ significantly from the behavior of male king-candidates during the high Middle Ages. In fact, given her circumstances, her actions were not only acceptable but also natural.

One obstacle to viewing Matilda's pursuit of her right to rule as normative is that the two names by which historians have traditionally referred to the period from 1135 to 1154, the Anarchy and the Interregnum, entail defining Matilda as either a problem or a nonentity. The custom of referring to this period as 'the Anarchy' certainly reflects reality: during the civil war that they fought, Stephen and Matilda could not "exert control" over "their supposed followers"; the result was what historian Robert Bartlett characterizes as "localized gangsterism."⁷ It is, however, a problematic descriptor because it sensationalizes both the relatively unbloody manner in which the Normans conducted warfare and the embattled but ongoing reign of King Stephen. Historian John Gillingham questions the term's appropriateness by demonstrating that Stephen, in keeping with the practice "within the English and French parts of the Angevin Empire" that "when men of high status were defeated . . . they were in little danger of suffering bodily harm—not even when they were dealt with as traitors," showed "restraint" when dealing with his enemies.⁸ Fellow historian David Crouch rejects the term outright as "a bad choice of name" as he defends King Stephen's reign.⁹ Although the word 'Anarchy' encourages the assumption that Stephen was a weak king, it has another

negative effect: it implicitly defines Matilda's struggle for the throne to which she had the sole legitimate claim as detrimental to England, thus leading to the conclusion that Matilda never gained—and could never have gained—the throne.

The other traditional term for the period between the end of Henry I's reign and the beginning of Henry II's, 'The Interregnum,' is less sensationalist but no less problematic. It does not credit the disputed reign of King Stephen with legitimacy, yet it elides the brief reign of Empress Matilda. Therefore, it encourages both historians and general readers to ignore this female ruler and assume that, in the medieval period, only the reigns of males count. Nevertheless, the biggest obstacle to viewing Matilda's pursuit of her inheritance as normative is not this terminology: it is the long-standing tradition among historians of presenting Empress Matilda as a footnote to, rather than a participant in, the power struggle that began with her father's death in 1135 and ended with her son's recognition as King Stephen's heir in 1153. This tradition continues to foster dismissive and misogynistic attitudes toward her.

Empress Matilda, like many other women who exercised power during the medieval period, has been the victim of misogynistic attitudes that modern historians tend to express as if they are natural. Although twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury praised Matilda despite his traditional view of gender roles, most modern historians base their assessments of her on the medieval sources that express a supposedly normative medieval attitude about the period between the death of Henry I in December 1135 and the accession of Henry II in 1154: that Matilda could never have reigned and had a personality unsuited to successful rule.¹⁰ Until recently, historians tended to dismiss Empress Matilda as a failed king-candidate who was the victim of her supposed "female gendered inadequacies" but acknowledge as kings two males whose reigns were disputed: King Edward V, a twelve-year-old boy who reigned for only three months in 1483 and—like Empress Matilda—was uncrowned, and King Stephen whose reign Matilda disputed from 1135 until Stephen recognized her son's right to the throne in 1147.¹¹ What is ironic about modern historians' characterizations of Matilda is that she is always wrong: she is both too feminine in her weaknesses and too masculine in her aggressive exercise of power.

The tradition of focusing on Matilda's supposed personality flaws, evident in the work of nineteenth-century historian Mary Anne Everett Green, remains palpable in Crouch's reference to the empress's "customary lack of tact" and suggestion that the ongoing instability in England during Stephen's reign was her fault: "One wonders if the sudden rash of goodwill was the cause or the result of the final departure from England

of the empress.”¹² In a similarly negative spirit, Bartlett suggests that Empress Matilda’s stepmother Adeliza might have turned her stepdaughter over to King Stephen due to tension caused by “Matilda’s own haughtiness” for which she “is notorious”; in addition, he mentions the oaths of fealty made to Matilda only in order to define them as “far less effective” means of ensuring succession than the heir’s coronation.¹³

This traditional bias against Empress Matilda has prevented her from becoming a significant feature of the English historiographical landscape, a fact Crouch demonstrates by dismissing the empress as a king-candidate saying, “the alternative, Mathilda [*sic*], could never be a king.”¹⁴ Church historian H. R. Loyn likewise dismisses the empress, not only eliding her brief reign but also implying that, as a woman, she was incapable of performing the manly action required to gain the throne. Loyn refers to her merely as the “lady of the English or of England, *domina Angliae*, [who] would have needed the extra touch of brutality—the killing of Stephen—and the support of the higher clergy and Rome in order to achieve the status of queen regnant.”¹⁵ For papal historian I. S. Robinson, Matilda is a marginal figure. Despite labeling Stephen’s acquisition of the English throne as “usurpation,” he mentions Empress Matilda only in passing as having brought her claim to the throne to Pope Innocent II; in addition, by referring to her merely as Stephen’s “rival,” he confers on her claim no particular legitimacy.¹⁶

In contrast to Robinson, historian Charlotte A. Newman recognized the empress’s reign. She observes that “for almost nine months, the Empress ruled England”; nevertheless, Newman describes that period as one during which Matilda “proved that she had an ability even greater than Stephen’s to alienate supporters.”¹⁷ As Charles Beem has argued, for historians to dismiss Empress Matilda in this way strips her of “historical agency” and ignores or downplays the fact that her “contemporaries agreed that Matilda was recognized as the sole source of royal authority for several months in the year 1141.”¹⁸

Acknowledging the empress more forcefully are Beem and fellow historian Marjorie Chibnall, who have strenuously asserted Empress Matilda’s unique contribution to English history as well as recognized her as England’s first female king.¹⁹ For this reason, they participate in an ongoing feminist revision of the medieval past although they do not self-identify as feminist scholars. Working in an Anglo-American feminist spirit, Chibnall has gathered evidence of and drawn attention to Empress Matilda’s persistent and competent efforts to gain her rightful inheritance.²⁰ By documenting the role of a female historical figure that many modern historians relegate to the margins of a narrative about a seemingly unbroken line of male rulers, Chibnall suggests

an alternate view of events following King Henry I's death in 1135, one in which Matilda is an active participant in historical events and a worthy adversary of King Stephen. Beem, working in a French-feminist spirit, demonstrates that in the cases of several female English rulers—including Empress Matilda—gender roles are always constructed, always partial.²¹ His analysis of Matilda's exercise of power facilitates reading Geoffrey of Monmouth's historical moment, one that offered historians a unique opportunity to explore the possibility of female kingship, from a feminist perspective. Beem argues that Empress Matilda was the first woman in England to achieve the status of king as well as that she tried to build upon the foundations laid by her father, King Henry I, for the reign of a legitimate daughter. On the latter point, the Matilda-skeptic Crouch agrees: "The king had intended his only surviving legitimate child, Mathilda [*sic*], to succeed him."²² Nevertheless, Beem makes a more specific argument: while her father attempted to smooth the transition from his own reign into hers by redefining and tightening the loose system of Norman royal succession, Matilda went through "a gender-bending process, drawing through time upon contemporary notions of manhood and womanhood embodied in the distinct gendered roles of kingship and queenship."²³

Beem's interpretation of how Empress Matilda combined male and female roles reflects the potential fluidity of gender roles in Matilda's time. Joan Cadden has documented the medieval belief that variations in the circumstances of conception could produce both a *femina virago*, 'a manly woman,' and a *vir effeminatus*, 'an effeminate man'; the existence of this belief demonstrates that femininity and masculinity were on a spectrum of biologically based behavior: they did not form a neat dichotomy.²⁴ Documenting an early medieval example of the fluidity of gender roles is historian Carol J. Clover who notes how early Norse tradition marked as inferior what is effeminate or powerless, not what is feminine in a modern sense, and created a social structure in which "a physical woman could become a social man" and "a physical man could (and sooner or later did) become a social woman" through aging.²⁵ Because of the work of historians such as these, it is possible to re-read the life and reign of Empress Matilda from a feminist perspective.

Precedents and Preparations for Female Kingship

Scholarship on medieval queenship has documented two trends: that the power of medieval queens decreased between the time of the Norman Conquest and the end of the Middle Ages, and that most queen consorts functioned as regents rather than as rulers who inherited thrones in

their own right.²⁶ Nevertheless, when King Henry I designated his only legitimate child Matilda as the heir to the English throne, he had powerful historical precedents on which to draw. One precedent originated in pre-Christian Europe in the form of a more flexible model of gender roles than Christian Europe would later allow: "Early Scandinavian culture, and perhaps Germanic culture in general" had "a sex-gender system" in which, despite the higher status of men, women could inherit property as well as function as "landholders," "traders," and "business partners"; widows could manage their own and their children's property; and daughters could function as sons if they had no male siblings.²⁷ Another precedent could have originated with King Malcolm II of Scotland, for he reputedly "introduced a royal inheritance law which gave preference to the royal lineage over the cousinhood"; as a result, "a daughter, daughter's son or daughter's daughter might be preferred to the agnatic heir male."²⁸ Still another precedent originated in the societies of the Franks, Visigoths, and Anglo-Saxons: because public and private spheres overlapped, women could exercise political power.²⁹ Given King Henry I's marriage to a descendant of the Scottish and Anglo-Saxon royal lines, both Scottish and Anglo-Saxon precedents had particular relevance for his daughter as a potential female king.

Anglo-Saxon history provided two additional precedents for female kingship. According to *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Seaxburh reigned for one year following the death of her husband King Cenwealh of Wessex in 672, and Æthelflæd—Queen of Mercia and eldest daughter of King Alfred—ruled Mercia for seven years after her husband's death in 911; both Æthelflæd's holding the title of *hlæfdige*, 'Lady' of the Mercians, as opposed to *cwen* 'queen consort' and her leading troops against the invading Danes suggest that she functioned as a female king.³⁰ Historian F. T. Wainwright's analysis of historical documents from the Anglo-Saxon period reveals that, because she replaced a husband who had been Ealdorman of Mercia under King Alfred, Æthelflæd ruled as "Myrcna hlæfdige [Lady of the Mercians]"—"the exact equivalent" of her husband's title, "Myrcna hlaforð [Lord of the Mercians]"—and received the immediate acceptance of the Mercians for two reasons: she was "half-Mercian by birth," and she had been ruling in her sick husband's stead for years, perhaps from 902 onward or even earlier.³¹ Furthermore, Wainwright's analysis disputes the account in the West Saxon version of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which identifies Æthelflæd only as King Edward's sister; consequently, the historian draws attention to a female leader who coordinated an effective military program with Edward: "She had made possible Edward's reconquest of the Danish midlands, she had extended English authority over the princes of Wales, she had helped

to bring about the immediate integration of Mercia and Wessex, and by her intervention in northern politics she had paved the way for the unification of all England under the kings of Wessex."³² Beem, however, adds a dimension to Wainwright's account of the exercise of power by Anglo-Saxon women.

By noting the similarity of queenship and kingship within Anglo-Saxon society, Beem reveals a strong precedent for Empress Matilda's reign as king of England. From the tenth century onward, Anglo-Saxon queens (like Carolingian ones) were anointed and consecrated through coronation, a process that put them in a separate category from ordinary people.³³ In addition, because the Old Testament provided a precedent for the anointing and coronation of Europe's kings, but not for its queens, the early medieval coronation of queens served an analogous function: "legitimizing the exercise of female authority within the context of decentralized state power."³⁴ As a result of such ceremonies, Anglo-Saxon queens "were within close proximity of the powers and prerogatives of kingship" and therefore outranked most of the men close to the kings.³⁵ In the early twelfth century, Matilda's kingship within a Norman cultural context became a realistic possibility in part because of her father's unique "attempt to construct a female inclusive principle of primogeniture as the primary determinant of succession."³⁶ The result of this attempt was that "regnant queenship" operated as a form of kingship in medieval England despite its "fashion[ing] almost entirely from socially constructed male roles: military leader, dispenser of justice, representative of God, and father."³⁷ Given her descent from the Anglo-Saxon line of kings, Matilda had to have been aware of how her anointing as empress and selection as her father's heir made kingship a realistic possibility for her.

The law in Henry I's England facilitated his plan of having Matilda succeed him. Unlike in France and other European countries where Salic law prevented women from ruling in their own right, England had no "theoretical bar to female royal inheritance."³⁸ According to Chibnall, the exercise of female authority was possible in the twelfth century because the "rules of succession in most Western kingdoms were still sufficiently fluid for the possibility of female succession to be a live issue if direct male heirs failed."³⁹ As a result of this fluidity, two examples of female kingship emerged between 1127, when Empress Matilda became her father King Henry's designated heir, and 1135, when she was preparing to become England's ruler: Queen Melisende (daughter of Baldwin II) who reigned over Jerusalem, and Queen Urraca (daughter of Alfonso VI) who reigned over Castile and León. Although Melisende ruled Jerusalem jointly with Empress Matilda's father-in-law Fulk of Anjou while Urraca ruled alone,

both of these female monarchs had fathers who made the same decision: because of the absence of a male child, each designated a daughter as his heir and found her a husband capable of defending her title.⁴⁰

By the time her father Henry I died, Matilda could plan her accession to the English throne knowing that she had ample precedent for “the exercise of informal power derived from male kinsmen” as well as contemporary models for “a woman’s sole possession of the regal estate and office.”⁴¹ The twelfth century had brought what Bartlett defines as a new form of rule for Western Europe: women “ruling in their own right and not as consorts of kings.”⁴² Given the ample precedent for female kingship as well as the lack of legal prohibition of it, Matilda’s father had good reason to believe that she could gain the throne by functioning as what Clover would call ‘a social man.’ Henry’s own manner of accession to the throne could only have strengthened this belief.

Henry’s success in taking—and then legitimizing—possession of the English throne probably encouraged his belief that he could select and present to the Norman barons a designated heir whom the barons would then support.⁴³ Because of the lack of clear and strict rules of succession for the sons of William the Conqueror, first William Rufus, and then Henry himself, had supplanted their older brother Robert Curthose by immediately seizing the royal treasury upon the death of the previous king and then achieving a quick coronation. Henry, however, had overcome opposition to his demand for the treasury at Winchester castle, and he had strengthened his grip on royal power through imprisoning Robert until Robert’s death in 1134 as well as crushing his other rivals; the fact that chroniclers recorded the rumor that Henry had blinded Robert suggests that the king had a reputation for cruelty within fifty years of his own death.⁴⁴ Having snatched the throne from his elder brother, Henry then had to legitimize his reign. He did so based on three grounds: his birth to an anointed king and queen, his own royal anointing and consecration, and strong public support for his kingship.⁴⁵ According to medieval historian Hugh the Chanter, Henry excused his hurried coronation on the grounds that it avoided potential disruption of governance in the kingdom.⁴⁶

Soon after he had achieved the crown, Henry consolidated his position by marrying strategically: he chose Edith (who soon gave up her English name to become Matilda II), the elder daughter of King Malcolm III and Queen Margaret of Scotland.⁴⁷ By marrying a descendant of “two ancient and illustrious lines of kings,” the Scottish line through Malcolm and the Anglo-Saxon line through Margaret (niece of Edgar the Ætheling), Henry solidified his alliance with the Scots while integrating himself into the pre-Conquest English royal line.⁴⁸ Although

Henry's connection to the Scottish royal house might have provided some protection for the northern border of his territory, it was much more important that his wife's mother, Margaret, was a kinswoman of King Edward and therefore was a member of what *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 1100 calls "[þan rihtan Ænglalandes kynekynne [the legitimate royal family of England]]."⁴⁹ This marriage enabled Henry I to achieve the social integration into Anglo-Saxon society that his generation, "the second-generation descendants of the Francophone incomers," sought.⁵⁰

In addition to endowing her husband with instant legitimacy, Queen Matilda had given Henry political security in the form of heirs: Matilda in 1102 and William in 1103. After the queen consort had "fulfilled her main task by producing a male heir" and thereby legitimized Norman dominion through her bloodline, she served as regent when her husband was in Normandy and pursued an active program of Christian service—a program that might have enabled King Henry to produce some of his illegitimate sons before the queen's death in 1118.⁵¹ Although Henry's extraordinarily busy and fruitful extramarital life could have complicated the issue of succession (he produced at least thirteen daughters and nine sons out of wedlock), the illegitimate daughters became their father's means of solidifying political alliances while the illegitimate sons were not king-candidates and never attempted to gain the throne.⁵² Despite King Henry's production of "more bastards than any other English king," William's birth had given his father political security: a legitimate male heir.⁵³

The lack of set rules of succession in Norman-run England enabled King Henry I to adapt as his circumstances changed, shifting from a male king-candidate to a female one. While his only legitimate son William was alive, Henry had tried to settle the issue of succession by adapting the tradition of oath-taking that his father, William the Conqueror, had used in 1086 to bind all significant landholders to him.⁵⁴ In order to designate Prince William as his heir, Henry had required first the Norman barons in 1115, and then the English ones in 1116, to swear fealty to his son; nevertheless, Henry's son was never crowned—perhaps because the king feared the potential threat to his own power.⁵⁵ The 1116 oath-taking in England had gained force, however, both through its location at Salisbury (where Henry's father William the Conqueror had held the great oath-taking of the barons in 1086) and through its emulation of the 1086 ceremony that itself likely followed Carolingian precedent.⁵⁶ Through this oath-taking, Henry had created an illusion of seamless succession.

By this point in time, Matilda had been the reigning Holy Roman Empress for about two years, her parents having sent her to her future husband in 1110 when she was eight years old.⁵⁷ According to Chibnall,

Matilda had probably been “educated strictly, with a view to active participation in government when she reached marriageable age.”⁵⁸ Matilda’s preparation for her reign as Holy Roman Empress became an asset for her father when, in 1120, William—the son on whom his father had reputedly “doted”—died in an alcohol-related boating accident.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as historian Eleanor Searle has noted, it was not possible for men in Norman-controlled England to “lay down rigid rules for the purpose of defining a unique heir, nor even a male heir”; they could only “insistently define legitimate claimants, a ‘pool’ of heirs.”⁶⁰

As a result of William’s death, Henry adopted a two-pronged strategy: he designated his remaining legitimate child as heir to the English throne while attempting to beget a legitimate child upon his very young second wife Adeliza, daughter of Duke Godfrey of Lorraine.⁶¹ Because the Normans (like their Anglo-Saxon predecessors in governing England) “had not previously recognized a fixed rule of royal succession, much less the idea of a woman ruling in her own right over a military feudal society,” both Norman and English noblemen required encouragement to accept two ideas that the king was promoting: primogeniture and a smooth future transition of power.⁶² According to Crouch, King Henry certainly had “difficulties in getting Matilda accepted by the magnates,” the lords whose immense landholdings gave them greater power than the regular barons possessed.⁶³ The king did, however, have great influence over the members of the Norman nobility because they—due to their lack of ancient lineage—defined their status in relation to their duke, a situation that made Henry the only conferrer of “honour and ‘nobility’ in the duchy.”⁶⁴ The king’s strategy of designating his daughter as his heir then became easier to implement when the death of Emperor Henry V in May 1125 left the twenty-three-year-old Empress Matilda a widow with both wealth and the potential to produce heirs.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, two obstacles to Matilda’s succession remained. One was that William Clito (son of Henry’s eldest brother Robert) had a claim to the English throne and in 1127 would receive the county of Flanders from King Louis VI of France; the other was that Norman queens had, up to this point, exercised power only as regents for an absent husband or a minor child.⁶⁶ As a result, “In promoting the claim of his daughter Henry was thus going against the expectations of the magnates, and it speaks volumes for his political dominance that he was able to secure their public commitment.”⁶⁷ King Henry’s selection of a female heir was an act committed out of necessity but one that created an unusual situation in mid-twelfth-century England: the expected reign of a female king.

Henry prepared for Matilda’s future reign using the same ceremonial means that had legitimized Prince William’s expected succession, again

emulating the great oath-taking of 1086 that had confirmed both the legitimacy and heredity of William the Conqueror's English crown.⁶⁸ Using two public oath-takings at which he "compelled" his vassals to acknowledge his daughter as his heir, Henry tried "to impose a female inclusive rule of primogeniture upon the royal succession."⁶⁹ Given the later claim of his grandson Henry II that Henry I had been "king, apostolic legate, patriarch, emperor and everything he wished to be, in his own land," the old king probably believed himself to be powerful enough to impose his wishes on the barons.⁷⁰ The first oath-taking took place in London on January 1, 1127, with both Empress Matilda and Queen Matilda present.⁷¹ The fact that, before the barons swore their fealty to his daughter, King Henry chose to display his power through a crown-wearing at his 1126 Christmas celebration—an action he had already used to reinforce the power of his second wife in 1121—indicates how carefully the king orchestrated the conferral of royal power on his daughter.⁷² Documenting the legitimacy of Empress Matilda's claim during her conflict with Stephen, William of Malmesbury reports in the *Historia novella* that King Henry bound the noblemen, bishops, and abbots of England to accept Matilda as their "dominam [lady]" because she was the person "cui soli legitima debeatur successio [in whom alone lay the legitimate succession]."⁷³ It is noteworthy that a history written in Matilda's day gave her a title that attempts to name a new situation—the reign of a female king as opposed to a *regina*, 'queen.' *The Contemporary History* also labels Matilda as "quondam imperatricem [former empress]"—perhaps to signal her new position as a future ruler of England—and declares that she is entitled to rule for two reasons: her grandfather, uncle, and father had all been kings, and her mother's royal line was centuries old.⁷⁴

The extant historical sources do not state whether the oath-takers saw their oath as applying to Normandy as well as England: this is a significant omission given that William the Conqueror had established a precedent for dividing his holdings when he died, with Robert Curthose possessing Normandy and William Rufus as the presumed heir to England.⁷⁵ These sources do state, however, that because Henry still hoped to beget a son upon his second wife, the 1127 oath was conditional on Henry I's lack of male issue.⁷⁶ With this caveat, Henry's chief minister Bishop Roger of Salisbury administered the oath, first to the archbishop of Canterbury, the other archbishops, and the abbots and then to King David of Scotland, the future King Stephen, and Earl Robert of Gloucester (King Henry's illegitimate son and Matilda's half-brother)—although whether Stephen or Robert took the oath first is disputed.⁷⁷ As Crouch notes, "It would be in the nature of things that the two favourites would be seen as rivals, and their supporters would form hostile camps" because Henry had given

both Robert and Stephen powerful positions, thus creating a court that “may have become unhealthily polarized.”⁷⁸

By 1131, the political landscape had changed in ways that required the English barons to swear a revised oath of unconditional fealty to Matilda. The second oath—taken at Northampton in September of that year—required the noblemen to swear absolute loyalty to their lady.⁷⁹ This step replicated what “*baugatal* and similar surrogate son provisions” in early Northern Europe had achieved: to “not only allow but institutionalize the female exception.”⁸⁰ It is likely that King Henry wanted Matilda’s inheritance confirmed at this time for two reasons. First, by 1131 Henry’s begetting another legitimate son was an increasingly remote possibility, given his age of sixty-four; second, the barons had just (through a council decision made at Northampton) restored Matilda to her second husband, from whom she had been separated since 1129.⁸¹ Because one probable outcome of this council session was a reminder to Matilda of her duty to produce heirs, the barons should have left it with greater confidence in the future of Henry I’s line.⁸² This meeting might also have smoothed Matilda’s path to the throne because the “public discussion” of her second marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou, a Plantagenet, could have constituted King Henry’s “tacit admission” that he had been wrong not to discuss his daughter’s potential marriage to Geoffrey at a great council before her betrothal in May 1127.⁸³ Despite the containment of the Angevins that a marital alliance with this rival family brought, the possibility that Count Geoffrey could become the “virtual ruler of Normandy and England” made the earlier lack of consultation particularly problematic and therefore “a cause of great resentment.”⁸⁴

According to historian Judith A. Green, the second oath “was clearly deemed to be crucial, because now the magnates could not claim, as Bishop Roger [of Salisbury] was later to do, that on the first occasion they had given their allegiance only on the understanding that Matilda was not to be married outside the kingdom without their consent.”⁸⁵ Therefore, by swearing fealty to Matilda immediately after the council meeting, the barons were, in effect, pledging their support to both her and her royal line. The second oath took on further significance because this council was “particularly well attended”; as a result, Matilda received fealty from both men who had been present at the first oath and men who had not.⁸⁶ King Henry even attempted to purchase ecclesiastical support for Matilda’s reign by giving property to the two men whom he expected to invest her with power: Bishop Roger of Salisbury, who controlled the royal administration, and Archbishop William of Canterbury, who would preside over and perform Matilda’s coronation.⁸⁷ According to historian Edmund King, it is also possible that Henry required his barons to take a

third oath in 1133 either in Normandy, this time to both Matilda and her son Henry (if medieval historian Roger of Howden's account is correct), or at Westminster.⁸⁸ Such a ceremony would have provided additional political insurance for Matilda.

Beem interprets King Henry I's preparations for the succession of his daughter in a feminist spirit. He cites the oaths the Norman barons swore to Matilda and the swearing of them in England as "circumstantial evidence" of King Henry's probable intention that his daughter would reign alone in England, if not in Normandy; in addition, Beem notes that the absence of solid evidence of any expectation on Henry's part that his son-in-law Geoffrey of Anjou would reign as king of England and duke of Normandy supports this conclusion.⁸⁹ Although Robert of Gloucester and other noblemen decided to offer Normandy to Count Theobald of Blois, apparently to prepare for "his claiming the throne of England," they immediately withdrew their support upon learning of Stephen's coronation.⁹⁰ Moreover, recorded comments in contemporary sources make no mention either of "Matilda's sex or the undesirability of Geoffrey [of Anjou] as a reason for supporting Stephen."⁹¹ The absence of gender-based objections suggests, in fact, that Matilda's candidacy was acceptable to her vassals. In addition, Robert of Gloucester's choice—as a highly capable military leader—to advise Matilda and support her candidacy rather than attempt to become king himself makes it likely that Henry's idea of "legitimate heredity" had gained some force by 1135.⁹²

Although King Henry I's sudden death precipitated a debate among Norman noblemen regarding whether they would support a woman's hereditary right to rule, it is clear that "Matilda's contemporaries, whether they supported her or not, did not consider her sex, by itself, as a legitimate justification for opposition to her position as her father's heir."⁹³ In fact, it is possible that Earl Robert's reported fondness for quoting Numbers chapter 36, a scriptural passage which expresses the concern that a female heir's tribe will lose possession of property if she chooses exogamy but treats female inheritance in the absence of male heirs as unproblematic, resulted from his belief in a biblical precedent for Matilda's reign.⁹⁴ Given the relative flexibility of the rules of succession under the Normans, the reign of a female king was much more likely in the twelfth century than it was later in the Middle Ages when male primogeniture had become normative throughout Western Europe.

Despite King Henry I's stubborn retention of power until his death, his final actions constitute an apparent attempt to ensure Matilda's accession to the English throne, and he died with her as his heir. Henry's recent biographer interprets the king's actions as potentially pro-Matilda: "He may have been trying to ease the way for her, by ensuring Dover

was in the custody of her brother, for example, and possibly by making concessions to the citizens of London.”⁹⁵ Surviving information cannot clarify whether the king decided to leave his lands to his daughter despite, or because of, his anger with his son-in-law. Nevertheless, the account of the king’s final actions that William of Malmesbury records likewise suggests that Henry desired that his daughter would succeed him. Although Stephen would later claim that the dying king had designated him as the heir, Henry “*filiae omnem terram suam citra et ultra mare legitima et perhenni successione adiucauit* [assigned all his lands, on both sides of the sea, to his daughter in lawful and lasting succession].”⁹⁶ The twelfth-century historian’s specifying that the king left both his English and Continental holdings to Matilda is particularly striking, for that would make her both king of England and duke of Normandy.

Additional corroboration of Matilda’s status as her father’s heir at the time of his death comes from the letters of Abbot Peter of Cluny (commonly known as Peter the Venerable), Archbishop Hugh of Rouen, and Bishop Ulger of Angers: neither the abbot nor the archbishop mentions King Henry’s supposed designation of Stephen as his heir, while a letter of the bishop of Angers states that neither of the men claiming to have witnessed this change in designation were, in fact, at the dying king’s bedside.⁹⁷ Judith A. Green’s analysis of the surviving evidence causes her to conclude that “Henry had done his best to assure Matilda’s succession in England,” and perhaps he assumed that the empress’s holdings “on both sides of the sea” would make her the ruler of Normandy as well.⁹⁸ This conclusion is reasonable given Chibnall’s assertion that “it seems likely that, for a time at least, [Matilda] thought... of Normandy as part of her inheritance.”⁹⁹ However, King Henry would not have been able to make preparations for his daughter to become king of England (and perhaps duke of Normandy) had she not been both fully qualified and prepared to rule.

Matilda as King-Candidate and Female King

Empress Matilda had all the prerequisites to be a king: royal blood, high status as a consecrated empress, a monarch’s education, and experience in governing. In addition to being her father’s only surviving legitimate heir, she was the embodiment of the Norman, Scottish, and Anglo-Saxon royal bloodlines. Her illustrious lineage was only enhanced by the fact that she was already a consecrated *imperatrix* ‘empress,’ a title she retained throughout her life.¹⁰⁰ As empress, Matilda possessed “the highest status a woman could achieve in Europe” and a title that “in theory elevated her social and political status above all other men in England and

France.”¹⁰¹ Furthermore, she belonged to “the category of well-trained, highly skilled, and literary sophisticated aristocratic women” and likely understood German, Latin, and perhaps Italian in addition to her native French.¹⁰² Given that “from the time of Henry I (nicknamed Beauclerk), Angevin rulers were trained in Latin,” there is no reason to suppose that Matilda received anything less than a monarch’s education and therefore was literate, which in twelfth-century Europe meant knowing Latin.¹⁰³

Crucially, Matilda was also an experienced and effective ruler. After marrying the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V when she was eleven years old, Matilda had performed the duties of her office from the age of fourteen until her first husband’s death.¹⁰⁴ One of these duties was serving, in 1117 and 1118, as judge in two court cases in northern Italy—a role that likely required the empress to speak Latin or Italian.¹⁰⁵ Recent scholarship concerning Matilda’s education has begun to correct the traditional underestimation of the empress’s intellectual attainments. For example, historian Elisabeth van Houts draws attention to Matilda’s unique role in these court cases, and she echoes fellow historian Amalie Fössel’s warning against minimizing “Matilda’s expertise, actions, or the authority with which she acted.”¹⁰⁶ According to van Houts, Matilda’s education under the supervision of Archbishop Bruno of Trier, along with “her administrative experience in Germany and Italy,” had familiarized her with legal texts—particularly with charters like the ones she witnessed in her roles as “queen consort, countess of Anjou, as lady of the English, and as caretaker for her son in Normandy.”¹⁰⁷ Matilda’s role as *consors regni*, ‘consort of the king,’ had given her abundant experience in government, for she had assisted Emperor Henry V in administering an empire stretching from northern Germany to Italy. In this role, she had performed a number of key functions on her husband’s behalf—issuing charters, judging lawsuits, and representing the interests of vassals to her husband—through which she had earned the people’s strong approval of her work.¹⁰⁸ Twelfth-century historians record how strongly her subjects approved of Matilda, despite the fact that she had not produced an heir for the emperor. For example, Orderic Vitalis reports that “ab externis multum diligetur [she was greatly loved abroad]” (meaning she was loved among her husband’s people), while William of Malmesbury asserts that the Germans so approved of Matilda that they did not want to lose her as empress when her husband died.¹⁰⁹

Matilda’s role as Holy Roman Empress had also enabled her to develop two skills essential for effective kingship: governing the people and managing military operations. Chibnall argues that the empress was well prepared to win a war against her cousin Stephen because she had led a life that was both “active and hazardous.”¹¹⁰ In March 1116, Matilda had

crossed the Brenner Pass with her husband when there was still snow on the ground; traveled to Rome through a war-ravaged Italy; helped him to govern the Matildine lands in Tuscany; and then, when her husband had to suppress a German rebellion, stayed on in Italy “acting as regent and presiding over courts for nearly two years.”¹¹¹ Various threats to her first husband’s control of the Holy Roman Empire had given Matilda the opportunity to support his “struggle to maintain traditional revenues, raise levies, and recover estates alienated during the civil wars.”¹¹² Because of her active role as empress, Matilda’s political and administrative experience was extensive: it was much greater than that of her much younger, and less powerful, second husband Geoffrey of Anjou.¹¹³

Perhaps the count of Anjou was indirectly acknowledging his wife’s superior status when he represented himself in a charter of 1130 as “the husband of Matilda, daughter of the king of the English and former wife of Henry, Roman emperor.”¹¹⁴ As the older and more powerful member of her second marital partnership, Matilda reversed the medieval norm of older men marrying younger brides and conferred on Geoffrey an identity in which he took apparent pride. Given the particularities of Matilda’s life, she demonstrates the potential flexibility of gender roles that Nancy F. Partner describes: “Gender *roles*, under certain special circumstances, may be available to individuals who do not qualify for them in biological sex but who ‘earn’ them through other attributes of personality and behavior.”¹¹⁵

Matilda’s qualifications for kingship were many, but it was the priority the Norman barons gave to their own retention and expansion of power that enabled her to seek her rightful position for so many years. With property on both sides of the English Channel to protect, the Norman barons had accepted Stephen’s accession in 1135 out of self-interest rather than principle.¹¹⁶ Their hesitation to transfer their loyalty to Stephen—partially to protect their power and partially to honor their oaths of fealty to the empress—is recorded even in the *Gesta Stephani*, a history biased in Stephen’s favor.¹¹⁷ Practically speaking, however, even the powerful Robert of Gloucester had “had little choice” but to accept Stephen once he had achieved coronation.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, as historian Paul Dalton’s case study of the baron Eustace Fitz John reveals, the civil war encouraged men with land and power both to divide and to shift their allegiance in order to protect their holdings.¹¹⁹

Although the membership of the Matilda and Stephen factions remained “relatively stable over long periods” because all barons wished to keep or regain land grants, and the supporters of both candidates were geographically “scattered,” personal interest could cause a baron to change sides or appear to do so.¹²⁰ For example, Eustace Fitz John “appears to have

offered his allegiance to Stephen in 1136," but northern chroniclers of the period suggest that this "allegiance... was far from genuine or whole-hearted."¹²¹ In addition, several factors encouraged Eustace's divided allegiance: he was "a close associate" of King David of Scotland as well as of other supporters of the empress; his brother held a substantial tenancy from Earl Robert of Gloucester, who in late May 1138 joined Matilda's faction; Eustace's main estates were in Northumberland, an area where he needed both Robert's and King David's support to protect his holdings; and, between 1136 and 1138, Eustace had not received adequate protection from Stephen, therefore potentially nullifying their feudal relationship.¹²² It is also possible that Eustace Fitz John was like "some of the northern magnates [who] were clearly sensitive about the oaths they had sworn to accept Empress Matilda" and therefore were at first unwilling to help Stephen through providing "determined resistance to Scottish invasions."¹²³ Furthermore, although Stephen tried to shore up his political position between 1136 and 1138 by distributing political rewards in exchange for loyalty, the barons were unlikely to be totally loyal to a king who faced two major threats: Matilda's faction and Scottish attacks.¹²⁴ Empress Matilda's qualifications would have seemed all the more impressive to the barons in light of Stephen's unsteady exercise of power that put the English throne within her reach.

Modern biographies of King Stephen vary in their diagnoses of why he struggled to retain the throne; nevertheless, the same historians who dismiss or belittle Empress Matilda as a historical figure acknowledge that Stephen weakened his position through both personal failings and tactical errors. These failings and errors eventually enabled Matilda to become king of England. Crouch suggests that one of Stephen's personal failings as he tried to consolidate power in 1136 was his putting "too much trust in the judgement of those around him whom he found most impressive"; as a result, the king came to rely too heavily on the support of his brother Henry and on Bishop Roger of Salisbury.¹²⁵ Crouch also faults Stephen's tactical error in handling the Welsh Marcher region, specifically his failure "to neutralize it as an internal threat" while "giv[ing] it a grievance around which to unite": leaving Marchers such as Robert of Gloucester and Miles of Gloucester to defend themselves.¹²⁶ Because Robert proved himself to be such a capable leader, he was able to inspire a great many Welshmen to join him in fighting for Empress Matilda's cause on English soil.¹²⁷

Historian R. H. C. Davis likewise identifies several errors the new king made between 1136 and 1139. One error was Stephen's handling of the tardy submission of Baldwin of Redvers, which revealed two problems that were weakening his position: "though [Stephen's] army might

be large, part of it was half-hearted; and . . . his own determination could be shaken."¹²⁸ This mismanagement of Baldwin made the new king appear weak to friends and enemies alike, as did his disastrous attempt in 1137 to defend his right to Normandy that, according to Bartlett, "ruined Stephen's prospects [there] for good."¹²⁹ Davis also identifies two further tactical errors: Stephen's rapid abandonment of his attempt to secure Normandy, territory that "was more important than he realized," and his failure to reward his brother Henry of Blois with the post of archbishop of Canterbury after Henry had played a pivotal role in Stephen's obtaining the throne—an error that gave Henry good reason to be disloyal.¹³⁰

Stephen's monumental blunder, however, was to alienate his brother, for Bishop Henry of Winchester—as papal legate from 1139 to 1143—had more control over the church in England than the archbishop of Canterbury.¹³¹ Stephen must have known that he needed to retain his brother's support to remain on the throne, but he then blatantly violated the rights of the church under pressure from Count Waleran of Meulan and other noblemen who argued that the bishops' power threatened the king's.¹³² Despite the solemn oath he had sworn in 1136 to uphold the rights of the English church, in June 1139 Stephen argued with the justiciar, Bishop Roger of Salisbury; subsequently dismissed Roger; and finally humiliated both Roger and his two nephews (both of whom were bishops) by arresting all three of them at Oxford after Waleran of Meulan had engineered a disturbance of the king's peace at court—a disturbance for which the bishops could be held responsible.¹³³ Crouch notes that King Stephen "actively participated in the plot" against Bishop Roger with Waleran, and Davis stresses that "by condemning the bishops in his own court he had broken his promise to the Church."¹³⁴ In addition, "the personal humiliation" Stephen had inflicted on both the three bishops and the chancellor Roger le Poer—Bishop Roger's son—risked political disaster: that the bishop's "powerful family, representing the Old Guard of Henry's reign" would change their allegiance and support Matilda.¹³⁵ Finally, Stephen's complete mismanagement of relations with the church resulted in his brother's summoning a council to formulate a response although its deliberations did not produce a decision.¹³⁶

As a result of the king's tactical errors, "by summer 1139, Matilda's arsenal of justifications included the oaths, hereditary right, and, if military efforts were successful, the will of God, the ultimate form of royal legitimacy."¹³⁷ Therefore, when Matilda arrived in England and went to the West Country on September 30, 1139, she could rely on the "solid support" of her half-brother Robert of Gloucester as well as that of her father's constable Miles of Gloucester and the "most loyal of all her followers," Brian Fitz Count.¹³⁸ This support did not wane despite obstacles

such as the decision of Queen Adeliza (King Henry I's second wife) to surrender the empress to King Stephen at the queen's castle at Arundel at a moment when Earl Robert was elsewhere, trying to gather support for his half-sister's campaign.¹³⁹ As 1139 drew to a close, Matilda's rescue of England from a king who had failed in his duty to the church and demonstrated a lack of determination on the battlefield might well have seemed inevitable to the Norman baronial elite.

The year during which Geoffrey of Monmouth completed his history, 1138, was the one that left Matilda poised to transform herself from a king-candidate into a female king. By this year, Stephen's personal failings and tactical errors had already produced a significant political shift, for, as Beem puts it, "A number of disaffected Anglo-Norman tenants-in-chief began to perceive Matilda as an attractive alternative to Stephen."¹⁴⁰ Of course, all the Norman barons—Robert of Gloucester included—often put retention of property ahead of matters of honor such as their oaths to Empress Matilda.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, as even the Matilda-skeptic Crouch admits, it is clear that Earl Robert was a man who "after 1137... wanted to see his sister on the throne of England," whatever his motives for this desire.¹⁴² Given that Geoffrey completed his history shortly before January 1139 (when fellow historian Henry of Huntingdon gained access to it as a result of a determined search for information about events in Britain before the invasion of Julius Caesar), he was finishing his account of the British past as the empress was preparing to rescue England from weak and morally questionable leadership and become the country's first female king.¹⁴³ Had Geoffrey of Monmouth completed his history between 1139 and 1141, his presentation of female figures might have been even further removed from that of his fellow historians, for Stephen's political blunders later enabled Matilda to possess sovereignty over England for several months.

The empress's methodical and long-term preparation for accession to her father's throne had certainly encouraged the baronage to view her future reign as inevitable, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's connections with the lay and church leaders who resided, as he did, at Oxford would have made him aware of this preparation. Beem has assembled strong evidence that Matilda was her father's daughter with regard to political acumen: in keeping with the oaths of 1127 and 1131 that fostered "the growing perception of Matilda as a singular individual in the public realm of feudal politics and government," Matilda crafted the public image of a reigning monarch between the time of her second marriage in 1128 and her father's death in 1135.¹⁴⁴ In order to do so, she usually represented herself in charters and grants first as *imperatrix* and second as *Henrici regis filia*, 'daughter of King Henry,' rather than as countess of Anjou; these

legal documents, which either drew upon her authority alone or added her authority to that of other nobles, reminded her subjects that “she was an anointed and consecrated empress, the highest status a woman could achieve in Europe”—and her father’s only legitimate heir.¹⁴⁵ Matilda clearly understood her right to rule as deriving from her status as both empress and legitimate heir; therefore, “Even before her father’s death, Matilda had already begun to erect a representational distance between herself and her second husband” in order to position herself as a female king.¹⁴⁶

Laying the groundwork for her, at that time, expected official recognition as king of England, the empress used both numismatic and legal self-fashioning during her campaign to achieve the throne. After 1139, with her powerbase established in the West Country, the empress crafted a royal image to match her kingly expectations: she had coins struck in her name, “sometimes bearing her imperial title, *imperatrix* or a variant, on the obverse.”¹⁴⁷ Her ability to mint and distribute coins is significant because it indicates that Stephen had lost the highly centralized control over coinage typical of medieval English kings.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, because no single image could adequately represent her status as a female king, Matilda struck coins sometimes in her name as empress and at other times in the name of her father or grandfather.¹⁴⁹ The numismatic evidence reflects Matilda’s reliance upon two main sources of power—her position as empress and her descent from the Norman kings—in order to create an image of female kingship. In a similar manner, Matilda used the charters she signed between the autumn of 1139 and the spring of 1141 to style herself a *feme sole*, ‘a woman acting alone, without a male guardian’: she bolstered “the authority and legitimacy of her position” by always identifying herself in documents as empress and daughter of King Henry.¹⁵⁰ Most importantly, her choice of a round royal seal—like that of her father and other male kings—rather than a queen consort’s oval seal presented her to the public as a king.¹⁵¹ Through this public persona as Emperor Henry V’s widow and King Henry I’s daughter, Matilda “began to wield power that relied on the symbolic authority of the dead men in her life”: her seal—a sketch of which appears on the cover of this book—is the image of power that she wished both nobles and non-nobles to accept.¹⁵²

Modern historians concur that, with her second husband both physically separated (he was on the other side of the English Channel) and symbolically separated from her public persona as the legitimate heir to the throne, Empress Matilda strove continually to take full possession of her inheritance from the time of her 1139 arrival in England until 1148.¹⁵³ That effort required her to play the role of warrior-king rather than the roles of wife and mother: she was at war with Stephen of Blois before her

eldest son turned three, and “for more than twelve years her life was spent in castles under constant danger of attack.”¹⁵⁴ After Robert of Gloucester formally renounced his allegiance to King Stephen just after May 22, 1138, Matilda devoted herself full-time to gaining the English throne.¹⁵⁵ She left Normandy with her sons (aged six, five, and three years) in their father’s custody.¹⁵⁶ By bracketing her status as Geoffrey of Anjou’s wife and the mother of young children, Matilda could “for representational purposes . . . cast herself in the role of a female *imperator*, the daughter of her formidable father.”¹⁵⁷

To assume the traditionally male role of king, however, Matilda had to behave like a king and likely believed that she had to do so; soon she “began to exhibit a number of characteristics reminiscent of her father and her first husband, both of whom were notably unscrupulous in the pursuit and maintenance of their royal estate.”¹⁵⁸ Perhaps her best-known act of brutality had taken place during the Lenten season of 1138, when Matilda kept her captured enemy Ralph of Esson in fetters until he surrendered his castles to her.¹⁵⁹ *The Deeds of Stephen* portrays her as particularly cruel to an enemy nobleman named Walter whom she fettered, put in a dungeon, and subjected to torture in 1145 because he had refused to surrender the castle of Malmesbury to her.¹⁶⁰ Matilda clearly understood that, to become king, she had to behave like a man; therefore, throughout her career as king-candidate and female king, Matilda avoided displaying traits traditionally defined as feminine.¹⁶¹

With the support of several powerful barons, in September of 1139, Matilda began to function as England’s king, with Robert of Gloucester serving as both her primary advisor and commander of her troops; by 1141, she had obtained the throne.¹⁶² Having established a solid foothold in England, she performed a king’s administrative functions: “From her limited base in the west of England, Matilda immediately began to function as a reigning monarch, issuing writs, charters, grants of land, minting coins, and distributing patronage contingent on her ultimate success for its practical fulfillment.”¹⁶³ That success came soon afterwards when Matilda achieved the political and military victories necessary to make the public image she had constructed a reality, thanks in part to the considerable freedom the barons had during the civil war. For example, Ranulf of Chester had earlier offered his support to Queen Matilda, wife of King Stephen, but he then joined the empress’s faction after he was accused of treachery.¹⁶⁴ Despite Stephen’s blockade of both Ranulf and his older half-brother William of Roumare, Ranulf had slipped through the enemy line, returning with Welsh reinforcements and their leader Robert of Gloucester.¹⁶⁵ Ranulf then gave the empress the means to triumph over Stephen: in January 1141, he seized Lincoln Castle, captured

Stephen when the king arrived to besiege it, and delivered Stephen into Matilda's custody.¹⁶⁶

By March 1141, Matilda had gained political backing commensurate with her strong military position: she had obtained Henry of Blois's support by convincing him that that she, unlike Stephen, was a friend to the church.¹⁶⁷ Through substantial gifts to monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions as well as a pledge to be a true protector of ecclesiastical rights, Matilda welcomed into her faction the man who had been her cousin's kingmaker.¹⁶⁸ With his own brother abandoning his cause, Stephen appeared to be on the verge of deposition. Bishop Henry was so powerful that, in his day, he was "not only the greatest patron of the arts in England but also the greatest dispenser of ecclesiastical patronage."¹⁶⁹ If it is true that Brian Fitz Count joined Matilda's faction in 1139 on the advice of Henry of Blois, then it is possible that Henry was publicly expressing a lack of confidence in his brother at this time.¹⁷⁰ However, whether or not Bishop Henry undermined his brother in this particular way, July 1141 brought the empress the support not only of Earl Gilbert of Pembroke and Earl Roger of Warwick but also of William of Beauchamp; because William was the sheriff of Waleran of Meulan's party, he was an ally whom the empress received warmly.¹⁷¹ By the summer of 1141, therefore, Matilda had demonstrated her "historical agency" by establishing "suzerainty over western and southwestern England," and she possessed the strategic advantage of having Stephen imprisoned at Bristol Castle, a stronghold of her half-brother Robert.¹⁷²

Unlike many modern historians who relegate Matilda to the margins of English history, historians of her own day credited Empress Matilda with attaining her ultimate goal in the spring and summer of 1141: she received the fealty of a significant proportion of King Stephen's chief barons. The twelfth-century historian John of Worcester offers a detailed account of Matilda's triumphant procession into the city of Winchester, declaring "*datur eius dominio corona regni Anglie* [the crown of the English kingdom was given into her absolute ownership]."¹⁷³ He also describes how Matilda received the full support of Bishop Henry at Winchester through his declaration that "*maledicuntur qui maledicunt ei, benedicuntur qui benedicunt ei, excommunicantur contradicentes, absoluuntur eius iussu parentes* [those who cursed her were cursed, those who blessed her were blessed, those who opposed her were excommunicated, and those who submitted to her were absolved]," and then how, at Oxford, "*totius...ciuitatis et circumiacentis regionis suscepit dominium atque hominum* [she received the lordship and homage of the entire...city and the surrounding region]."¹⁷⁴ This was clearly the apex of Matilda's career, an event that Beem argues constituted "the first manifestation of

female kingly sovereignty in English history” because, “from February until late summer 1141, contemporary sources considered Matilda the master of all England.”¹⁷⁵

Although twelfth-century sources do not confer on Matilda’s second husband Geoffrey the title of *rex Anglorum* (‘king of the English’) and do acknowledge Matilda as “the only source of royal authority,” she has not yet received her rightful place in the traditional list of English monarchs.¹⁷⁶ Even *The Deeds of Stephen*, an account of the civil war that villainizes the empress as well as dismisses both her claim to the English throne and the concept of female kingship, refers to Matilda as *regina*; more importantly, by broadening the meaning of that word, it “imply[es] that Matilda was in fact a female king.”¹⁷⁷ She had not yet made her kingly status official through an anointing and coronation ceremony, but Matilda was poised to undergo that ceremony by the spring of 1141.¹⁷⁸

Matilda’s brief reign possessed legitimacy because her father had established the concept of female-inclusive primogeniture, the barons had sworn fealty to her twice, and she had won a military victory over her rival Stephen—a victory her contemporaries would have construed as an expression of God’s will.¹⁷⁹ In keeping with the positive reception that the empress had received when entering Winchester, in March 1141 the barons and high-ranking clergy elected Matilda *domina*, ‘lady’ or ‘sovereign lord of the English,’ and “her status as a woman proved no bar to her recognition as a female king.”¹⁸⁰ Having received homage and the crown from both lay and ecclesiastical leaders, Matilda then behaved like the new king of England. As a result, beginning in April 1141, Matilda presented herself in charters as possessing three titles, each a claim to power: *imperatrix*, *Henrici regis filia*, and *domina Anglorum*.¹⁸¹ The third title, *domina*, whether translated as ‘female lord’ or as ‘lady,’ would have had particular resonance for Norman aristocrats because its use was an assertion that—with Stephen captured—Matilda was a king whose “coronation seemed imminent.”¹⁸² By using charters to establish her identity as a female monarch, Matilda reinforced a public image consistent with the imperial seal she had been using since her arrival in England in 1139, a seal that depicted her on a throne and bore the inscription *Mathildis dei gratia Romanorum Regina*, ‘Matilda by the grace of God Queen of the Romans.’¹⁸³

Matilda’s choice of both seal and primary title suggests that she viewed herself as a female king and wished to present herself as such. Nevertheless, Matilda’s seal was neither like the seals of aristocratic men, which normally depicted them on horseback in order to highlight their military skill, nor like those of aristocratic women that depicted them standing.¹⁸⁴ Instead, as can be seen on this book’s cover, it presented Matilda seated

on her throne as a reigning monarch and was round—like that of a male king—rather than oval like that of a queen consort. As Beem notes, Matilda's "persistence in using her imperial seal set her apart from both male and female English aristocrats, creating for herself a singular form of identification that was meant to overawe her tenants and subjects."¹⁸⁵ Such persistence suggests that this unique portrait of power was one that Matilda felt accurately portrayed her identity as a ruler and was the image of her that she wished her people to internalize.

Matilda's use of the term *domina* as her primary label reinforced a public image of female kingship.¹⁸⁶ Matilda's identity as *domina*, according to Beem, had several possible advantages: the word corresponded to the Old English word *hlæfdige*, which the Anglo-Saxons had used to refer to a woman "exercising political and military power"; it connoted the broad range of public offices kings and other men had performed as *domini*, 'lords'; and it might have signified for Matilda the appropriate title for a king elected, but not yet crowned.¹⁸⁷ By adopting the title of *domina*, Matilda was signaling her status as a female lord and as "an individual woman capable of possessing and wielding regal power."¹⁸⁸ It is also possible that she was signaling a desire to emulate Æthelflæd, both in ruling with the same powers as a man and in using military power to facilitate political unity in England. Perhaps preparing for her son to rule after her, Matilda had the then seven-year-old Henry confirm her grants and charters in a way that recognized her status as ruler: in these documents, the future King Henry II refers to his mother as *domina mea*, 'my female lord,' and *mater mea imperatrix*, 'my mother the empress.'¹⁸⁹ In this way, Matilda positioned her son in relation to herself just as her father had earlier positioned his daughter in relation to himself.

Reinterpreting 'Feminine Failings': Matilda's Reign in Context

Despite the legitimacy of Matilda's claim to the English throne and her victory over Stephen in 1141, gaining full possession of her rightful inheritance was always going to be difficult because of three interconnected causes: the actions of her cousin Stephen of Blois, the timing of her pregnancies, and a dispute with her father. At Christmas time in 1132, when Matilda was awaiting the birth of her first son Henry and her father was ill, Stephen of Blois stayed with the king: his apparent goal was to ingratiate himself into the royal court and thereby prepare for his future seizing of power.¹⁹⁰ Having already lost some political ground to Stephen, Matilda nearly died in 1134 after the birth of her second son, Geoffrey. She was so ill, in fact, that she made all the necessary preparations for her

death: she gave generously to the poor and the church as well as selected her burial place.¹⁹¹ Although the empress recovered her health, her illness gave Stephen time to strengthen his relationship with his uncle.

Matilda was at a further disadvantage in the struggle to acquire the throne because of her father's ongoing refusal to offer homage to his daughter and son-in-law as the owners of the castles in Normandy and England he had given to them.¹⁹² It is possible that Henry feared ceding power to his son-in-law because of Geoffrey of Anjou's aggressive assertion of his rights to property and his "ally[ing] himself with dissident Norman barons."¹⁹³ Perhaps the king felt that the count was behaving as if he planned to share the throne with Matilda after her father's passing, a perception that would have reinforced Henry's long-standing fear of Angevin acquisition of Norman power. Whatever the cause of King Henry's actions, however, the problematic result of her father's stubbornness was that Matilda could not "command the loyalty of those who held royal and ducal castles" and therefore could not assert her claim unopposed when her father died.¹⁹⁴ Her father's failure to transfer the most valuable part of her dowry into the hands of her husband left Matilda in a weak strategic position in Normandy when King Henry died in December 1135.¹⁹⁵ Making the empress's situation even more complicated was her pregnancy with her third son, William. Because of the near-fatal complications of her second pregnancy and the awkwardness of taking up the role of king while heavily pregnant, Matilda might have been reluctant to travel before giving birth.¹⁹⁶

In order to account for Stephen's retention of the English throne, some modern historians hypothesize that Matilda delayed taking action and then account for her delay. For example, in trying to explain why Matilda did not besiege Le Sap until October 1136, some modern historians cite medieval accounts of Matilda's conflict with her father over the Norman castles that formed part of her dowry.¹⁹⁷ Others explain her supposed delay through her third pregnancy.¹⁹⁸ Even Beem, who presents Matilda's reign as a significant feature of the English historiographical landscape, accepts the premise that she delayed and explains that delay through her pregnancy. For Beem, the pregnancy is the deciding factor because Matilda took military action two or three months after the birth of her third son William on July 22, 1136.¹⁹⁹ Given her apparently great desire to rule, the historian finds it "difficult to imagine why else Matilda, who must have been well aware of how her recent predecessors became kings, did essentially nothing to establish her claims in England immediately following her father's death."²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Beem notes that once she was finished with her childbearing duties, Matilda became a formidable competitor for the throne.²⁰¹

Both of these explanations of the empress's behavior, however, assume that Matilda did not take action immediately—an assumption consistent with most modern historians' tendency to characterize her as a poor leader. Chibnall, in contrast, argues convincingly that Matilda immediately and energetically sought to assert and protect her hereditary right to the English throne. In an article that sets out to correct traditional interpretations of the empress, Chibnall asserts that the conflict between King Henry I and his daughter over "the castles in the marches in Normandy and Maine which had been Matilda's dowry" did not cause delay on Matilda's part; moreover, Chibnall argues that this conflict was probably not as serious as medieval historian Robert of Torigni claims, despite the fact that it put Matilda at a strategic disadvantage when her father died at Lyons-la-Forêt while she was in Anjou or Maine.²⁰² Furthermore, Chibnall concludes that Matilda's third pregnancy did not delay her taking action either; instead, "political and military circumstances alone made it impossible for her to get even as far as the Channel."²⁰³

Empress Matilda attempted to transform into political reality her father's intention that she reign. Despite the suddenness of her father's death and her own physical condition, she secured her position in southern Normandy as quickly as she could; consequently, the empress received the castles of Argentan, Exmes, and Domfront while her husband Geoffrey took possession of other castles.²⁰⁴ Chibnall explains that Matilda "had immediately advanced as far as she could into Normandy," but she "had no chance of reaching the coast, controlled no port, and had no vassals in England."²⁰⁵ Flatly contradicting the common assumption that Matilda failed to provide her supporters with effective leadership, Chibnall states, "There was no question of her pregnancy deterring her from going immediately to England to demand her inheritance" and therefore Matilda first advanced as far as possible and then "held out in a dangerous advance post far into Normandy, with the courage and resolution that might have been expected from her previous career."²⁰⁶ What has traditionally been labeled the empress's failure to take immediate action was actually a function of her situation: she had no choice but to await her husband Geoffrey's return to Normandy in September 1136, and then the count of Anjou's invasion was unsuccessful.²⁰⁷ As soon as the empress could coordinate her efforts with those of her husband, she "led a force of about two hundred men to help her husband at the siege of Le Sap" and therefore "showed no sign of feminine weakness."²⁰⁸ Chibnall's conclusion that Empress Matilda consistently sought to strengthen her strategic position gains further support from one of Matilda's actions in June 1138. Involving her sons in the business of governing at a young age, the empress had all three of them add their crosses to hers on a

charter their father had made, one offering concessions to the citizens of Saumur.²⁰⁹ This action had two strategic advantages: it reminded all who saw the charter that the empress was the progenitor of a royal line, and it reinforced her sons' status as heirs to the English throne. In this situation, Matilda again proved herself her father's daughter: a deliberate constructor of royal power.

Matilda's decisive actions could not, however, prevent her cousin Stephen of Blois's equally decisive actions. In December 1135, he made the quick and easy crossing from the port of Wissant in Boulogne to England and seized the treasury.²¹⁰ Because Stephen could depend on "the support of vassals of the honor of Boulogne in the southeast" and had the support of both the Londoners and his brother Bishop Henry of Winchester, he achieved coronation three weeks after Henry I's death.²¹¹ Weakening Matilda's position further was the fact that Stephen was able to acquire—or, from Matilda's perspective, to usurp—the throne when Robert of Gloucester was unavailable to prevent it. Robert, loyally honoring his father King Henry's final request, was traveling in order to pay all the household and military debts outstanding at the time of the king's death.²¹² Stephen clearly understood that, among the Normans, oaths of fealty alone did not constitute the conferral of kingship: an interregnum was in effect until the next king was crowned, and that the interregnum might be very short if "political circumstances demanded it."²¹³ Acting as ruthlessly as King Henry himself had done when he was crowned just three days after his brother William's death, "Stephen's actions had all the makings of a premeditated coup."²¹⁴ *The Deeds of Stephen* supports the theory that this acquisition of power required planned and coordinated efforts: it portrays Stephen as setting out for England with the goal of establishing order and then making a pact with the citizens of London, and it describes Stephen's brother, Bishop Henry, as the person on whom Stephen depended for success because the royal treasury was in Winchester.²¹⁵ *The Contemporary History* of William of Malmesbury stresses that, without his brother Henry as his guarantor, Stephen's oath to protect the rights of the church would not have been acceptable to the archbishop of Canterbury.²¹⁶

Given that Stephen was the only candidate in London at the time, he was anointed and crowned by the archbishop on December 22, 1135; furthermore, because to the public Stephen's acquisition of the throne had seemed "virtually unopposed," his contemporaries accepted it as an expression of God's will.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, twelfth-century chroniclers claim that Robert of Gloucester might have suggested the then nearly three-year-old Henry Plantagenet as their future king, a possible indication of the earl's reluctance to set aside Matilda's claim.²¹⁸ Had Rabel

of Tancarville—the only Norman baron willing to defend her right of succession immediately after “Stephen’s coup”—been in a location close enough to hers that he could have supplied military support, the empress’s cause could have received a better hearing.²¹⁹ Certainly, the fact that Matilda’s uncle, King David of Scotland, had to balance his support of her with his own political interests meant that she could not depend on his assistance either—despite his feeling “sincerely committed” to the empress’s cause.²²⁰

In 1139, Stephen tried to legitimate his usurpation of the English throne by claiming at the papal court of Pope Innocent II that there were legal impediments to Matilda’s succession, ones justifying the dismissal of her right to succeed. At the Second Lateran Council, Bishop Ulger of Angers presented the empress’s charge that Stephen had committed “*periurii et illicite presumptionis regni* [perjury and unlawful seizure of the kingdom].”²²¹ In response to this charge, Stephen’s representative, Archdeacon Arnulf of Sééz, made three major claims: King Henry I had coerced Stephen into swearing an oath to Matilda, Stephen’s oath to her had been conditional, and this oath had become void when the king designated another heir—namely Stephen.²²² Archdeacon Arnulf also argued that Matilda’s claim was illegitimate because her birth, he alleged, was illegitimate: according to this argument, she was both a product of incest and the daughter of a woman who had taken a nun’s vows before King Henry had forcibly removed her from the monastery at Romsey.²²³

In response to these highly questionable arguments, Pope Innocent II gave Stephen a partial victory by confirming him as ruler of England and Normandy, but did not declare the empress to be the product of an illegitimate union; this decision reaffirmed Archbishop Anselm’s somewhat reluctant sanction of her parents’ marriage.²²⁴ Despite its partial nature, however, Stephen’s legal victory entailed the pope’s rejection of Matilda’s appeal to gain her rightful inheritance. Stephen had, of course, practically ensured the outcome of the papal deliberations by making certain that the head of the church was adequately “plied” with gifts.²²⁵ Nevertheless, the pope had compelling and practical reasons for upholding Stephen’s usurpation of his cousin’s throne: first, to facilitate the deposition of an anointed and consecrated king would have eroded the church’s ability to influence any European king; second, Innocent was highly motivated to “retain the friendship of the English king,” as the pope’s 1139 conferring of the “coveted honour of the native legation” on Stephen’s brother Bishop Henry of Winchester demonstrates.²²⁶ By deciding in Stephen’s favor, although barely, Pope Innocent II protected ecclesiastical interests while managing not to support King Stephen as an individual.

Following the pope's refusal to help her gain her inheritance, Matilda did not achieve coronation for a combination of political and military reasons. Her political fortunes began to decline when, in response to her aggressive assertions of power, the Londoners became so violent on June 24, 1141 that she had to flee in order to avoid capture.²²⁷ Her fortunes then declined further when Bishop Henry withdrew his allegiance to Matilda, perhaps because the empress was refusing to give Stephen's son Eustace his inheritance at the same time as Stephen's wife, Queen Matilda, was pleading with Bishop Henry to rejoin his brother's faction.²²⁸ The loss of Bishop Henry's support was, in effect, the loss of the church's support for Matilda's kingship. Nevertheless, according to John of Worcester, because the empress's military forces continued "*uir-tute roborata et numero* [to grow strong in strength and number]," she decided to try to regain Winchester.²²⁹

In September 1141, however, she suffered defeat in the Battle of Winchester; worse still, the battle not only forced her to flee but also resulted in the capture of Robert of Gloucester. Matilda escaped falling into Stephen's hands only because of the aid of Count Geoffrey of Penthievre, who rallied her troops.²³⁰ This devastating defeat forced Matilda, as a still uncrowned female king, to trade Stephen for Robert and thus lose her former military advantage. Although now mired in a military stalemate, Matilda "continued to hold court as Lady of the English in the southwest, minting coins and bestowing patronage."²³¹ This behavior suggests that she continued to view herself as England's legitimate ruler, despite Stephen's arranging a Christmas crown-wearing for himself and his wife that "reasserted [his] regality in a bold and public manner."²³² Robert of Gloucester attempted to break the stalemate by bringing young Henry to England in 1142, but the boy's presence was not sufficient to spur a decisive military victory for his mother.²³³

From 1142 until 1147, Matilda (perhaps to avoid capture) allowed her male relatives to advance her cause, but the legitimacy of her claim to the throne continued to inspire passionate support from members of the Norman nobility. After fleeing Oxford in December 1142 to escape a siege by Stephen's forces, Matilda remained in the castle of Devizes "for five years, at the center of resistance, while her half-brothers and loyal supporters campaigned on her behalf."²³⁴ Evidence of the strong loyalty Matilda's cause inspired survives in the form of a letter written by Brian Fitz Count in response to a letter from Bishop Henry of Winchester, one in which Henry faults Brian for failing to rejoin King Stephen's faction.²³⁵ Historian H. W. C. Davis's assessment of both this correspondence (written between September 1142 and January 1144) and the content of Brian's letter is noteworthy, for Davis presents Matilda's cause as the honorable

one. The historian describes how the hypocritical Bishop Henry tried to position himself as “the dignified censor of one whose main offense consisted in refusing to change sides as often as himself,” while Brian Fitz Count consistently behaved as a man of honor who “from 1139 to the close of the war . . . held Wallingford in the Angevin interest”; by remaining loyal, Brian “risked much” and “lost everything.”²³⁶ According to Davis, the content of Brian’s letter reflects the nobleman’s feeling “exasperated to find [himself] deserted and denounced by those who had instigated rebellion [against Stephen] in the name of religion” as well as provides a list of fifty men that includes “all of the prominent individuals who are known to have been with [Empress Matilda] at Winchester and London in 1141.”²³⁷ Because these men had witnessed Bishop Henry urge Matilda’s cause, the list was perhaps “intended as an enumeration of Matilda’s supporters” at the time; if it was so intended, the fact that the list is “longer and more imposing than we should gather from the attestations of charters” defines Brian’s choice as that of the honorable majority.²³⁸

Sensing that the loyal support of men such as Brian Fitz Count would not be adequate to remove Stephen from the English throne, Matilda took action to protect and advance her eldest son’s claim to it. By 1142, Matilda’s son Henry was nine years old, and she—perhaps to bolster her own position through a male heir and prepare for her son’s future reign—added his name to some of her charters and had him receive homage from supporters.²³⁹ By 1144, possibly because the terrible famine of 1143 had dampened people’s enthusiasm for Matilda’s ongoing struggle to gain her inheritance, Matilda was issuing charters with her son rather than alone: these charters named her as *domina Anglorum* (‘female lord of the English’) and him as *filius ducis Normannorum* (‘son of the duke of the Normans’), with the latter title possibly invoking Geoffrey of Anjou’s success in securing young Henry’s inheritance across the Channel.²⁴⁰ The empress could not, however, recover from her next loss: the death of Robert of Gloucester in 1147. Having retained her status as *domina* until early 1148, Matilda now lacked the military backing of her staunchest ally and therefore returned to Normandy, “in effect, bequeath[ing] her royal claims to her eldest son.”²⁴¹ Nevertheless, what is striking about her long war to gain permanent possession of the English throne is that—although she never achieved outright victory—she “never lost” the war either.²⁴²

An Active and Influential King’s Mother

Despite the fact that she was never able to become a crowned female king, Matilda’s retreat from aggressively challenging Stephen was both partial and gradual. Although she allowed her fourteen-year-old son to begin

protecting her inheritance in 1147, she had continued to use the title of *domina Anglorum* until that time; had lived as an independent woman for most of the period between 1139 and Geoffrey of Anjou's death in 1151; and retained her identity as empress and daughter of King Henry until her own death in 1167.²⁴³ Given that her status as empress, like that of a queen consort, had been conferred on her through a religious ceremony that gave it "quasi-sacramental status" through consecration, her retention of that identity was entirely appropriate.²⁴⁴ In 1148, Matilda returned to Normandy, a territory her husband Geoffrey had conquered in 1144, and after her son Henry became a knight by the hand of her uncle King David of Scotland in 1149, her son "took control personally of the struggle for the English throne."²⁴⁵ Matilda and the future King Henry II took over the government of Normandy in 1150, the point at which Geoffrey of Anjou turned sovereignty over to them.²⁴⁶ Perhaps this joint rule reinforced the boy's matrilineal right to succeed while enabling Matilda to teach her son how to govern.

After the 1153 Treaty of Winchester failed to mention her claim to the English throne but "implicitly recognized Matilda's right to transmit a hereditary claim" to it by naming her son as heir, she played the role of *mater regis*, 'mother of the king.'²⁴⁷ Serving in a long-sanctioned traditional queenly role from the time of her second husband's death in 1151 until her own death in 1167, Matilda was able to exercise power with "her practical authority unquestioned"; in addition, she was the person of whom Thomas Becket asked aid when he sought reconciliation with King Henry II, although the empress died before she could achieve this diplomatic goal.²⁴⁸

King Henry II's reverent treatment of his mother suggests that he understood her political significance, while his refusal to acknowledge Stephen's reign suggests that he viewed his mother as his grandfather's true heir. Chibnall concludes that the son treated his mother "with reverence all her life" because, after the empress had (possibly as early as 1141 or 1142) abandoned hope of achieving coronation herself, she had worked tirelessly for Henry's succession in England and Normandy.²⁴⁹ Perhaps out of respect for his mother's political efforts and to signal that his mother should have received coronation before him, King Henry II always had his mother's name precede his in their joint charters; moreover, when he had to be away from Normandy, she served as "his deputy to issue writs, hear cases, and confirm Church elections" despite his gradual development of a set of other advisors.²⁵⁰ Bartlett documents behaviors on Henry II's part that appear to reflect Henry's understanding that Stephen was never king by right. Although Henry performed homage to Stephen as a result of the 1153 treaty, as king, "Henry II never admitted

the legitimacy of Stephen's reign."²⁵¹ In fact, even in the final years of his own reign, Henry II is recorded as describing how God made it possible for him to accede to the throne of which his "ablatoris [usurper]" had temporarily deprived him.²⁵² Matilda's son not only "carefully avoided any mention of his predecessor" in his 1166 survey of knights' fees but also conditioned his barons to use the passing of King Henry I—not the beginning of Stephen's reign—as the approved time marker and to refer to the period of Stephen's reign as "the time of war."²⁵³ For Henry II and the other Angevin kings, therefore, there was no "legitimate government" during the disputed reign of Stephen.²⁵⁴

Although Empress Matilda eventually played the traditional female role of king's mother during her son's reign, she had a significant impact on the political landscape of medieval Europe as an uncrowned female king. She certainly did more than raise a son with her gift for "political creativity": for many years, she had been able "to transcend the limitations of her gender and construct an image of independent female lordship."²⁵⁵ She also, according to Latin literature specialist Simon Meecham-Jones, became an active patron of "the writing of the history of the [Norman] dynasty."²⁵⁶ Had conditions allowed her to gain a quick foothold in England immediately after her father's death, perhaps Matilda would have become England's first crowned female king. Chibnall's characterization of Empress Matilda as "a remarkable woman" whose "achievements were lasting" suggests that this female king deserves a more prominent place in standard accounts of English history.²⁵⁷ The short-term result of her brief reign was the power her son King Henry II enjoyed as the heir to the kingdom of England and the dukedom of Normandy, for while Matilda fought to retain holdings in England, Geoffrey of Anjou was able to retain control over and pass on to their son the other part of Henry I's realm: Normandy. The long-term result, however, was "the precedent of female transmission of a hereditary right to the throne" that Henry II's reign created.²⁵⁸ This precedent enabled the Tudors in the sixteenth century and the Stuarts in the seventeenth to transmit sovereignty when they lacked a viable male king-candidate.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the early British past—the book traditionally referred to as *The History of the Kings of Britain* but to which its author gave the gender-neutral title *De gestis Britonum* (*Concerning the Deeds of the Britons*)—merits further investigation in light of historians' recent recognition of Matilda's outstanding qualifications for kingship and successful crafting of a public persona by "manipulat[ing] and transgress[ing] the gendered distinctions existing between men and women in twelfth-century England."²⁵⁹ Composing his account of the British past at the historical moment at which Matilda was preparing to

take possession of her inheritance as England's first female king and to displace a usurper who had refused to honor the claim of the rightful heir, Geoffrey simultaneously critiques civil war and promotes female kingship. He supports what was for him the impending reign of Empress Matilda in two ways. In the Arthurian section of his book, he supports Matilda's cause indirectly through attributing to Arturus's mother Igerna and wife Ganhumara both greater power and a greater number of positive attributes than they possess in subsequent versions of the Arthurian past. In the non-Arthurian portion of his history, however, Geoffrey supports the concept of female kingship directly. By inventing the careers of three female kings and two female king-candidates who predate Arturus, Geoffrey of Monmouth not only creates precedents for Matilda's reign as a female king but also presents female kingship as a viable and attractive alternative to the often problematic behavior of male kings.

CHAPTER 2

GEOFFREY'S HISTORY AS PREPARATION FOR A FEMALE KING

As noted in the introduction, scholars have consistently relegated female figures to the margins of their discussion of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. A particularly striking example of this tendency, however, is medieval romance specialist Robert W. Hanning's foundational study, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth*.¹ Discussing the moment in Geoffrey's account of the founding of Britain at which Brutus comforts his new wife Innogin as she mourns the loss of her homeland, Hanning positions both Geoffrey's female figures and episodes in which warriors display emotional sensitivity outside the bounds of 'history.' He does so by defining Innogin as a romantic element marginal to what 'history' really is, an account of national origins and political freedom in which only male figures matter: "For a moment the issues of national birth and freedom are forgotten; history itself is forgotten, and attention is focused on the timeless problems of wives and lovers. This is but a momentary departure, however; Innogin is not spoken of again, except as the mother of Brutus's children."² By treating this moment—despite its integration into the story of Britain's first king—as a romantic anomaly that lacks a meaningful position within *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Hanning defines Galfridian females as incidental in, rather than integral to, the narrative of the past that Geoffrey constructs. As a result, this critic dismisses the aspect of Geoffrey's history that causes it to differ fundamentally from its three main historiographical sources: Gildas's sixth-century *De excidio Britonum*, Bede's eighth-century *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and the early ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*.

In contrast to Hanning's study, this chapter contends that attention to female figures reveals how Geoffrey's historiographical project differs

from both the secular history that provided the outline of his narrative of early Britain, *The History of the British*, and the staunchly Christian histories of Gildas and Bede that supplied some of the material he used to transform that outline into a detailed account. Comparison of Galfridian females with the female figures in his three main sources reveals how Geoffrey's passion for political critique rather than moralizing enables some of his characters to escape the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Geoffrey's warrior-kings can have a gentle, nurturing side while his queens can function as both warriors and kings. More specifically, this chapter argues that Geoffrey's history is a feminist work of the medieval period because it not only includes female figures as more than footnotes to the deeds of famous men but also gives these female figures what they lack in the histories of his predecessors: nontraditional as well as traditional roles, preparation for and the opportunity to reign, and a moral position equivalent to or above that of their male counterparts. The first step in developing this argument is to document how Geoffrey of Monmouth, responding to the historical moment at which the accession of Empress Matilda to the English throne appeared imminent, intrudes into his narrative of the British past in ways that encourage the Norman barons to support Matilda as her father's legitimate heir and gives to his female figures much more varied—and much more positive—roles than his predecessors give to theirs.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, His History, and the Year 1138

Although most scholars who study *The History of the Kings of Britain* interpret the known information about Geoffrey's life in similar ways, this commonly accepted interpretive backdrop has not yet been used to link the many female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey's history to Empress Matilda's career as a king-candidate and female king. Using the seven extant charters to which Geoffrey of Monmouth appended his signature, historian H. E. Salter has pieced together an outline of his life: Geoffrey was in the Oxford area between 1129 and 1151; had a close connection with Ralf of Monmouth, a canon of Lincoln Cathedral; and, based on his signing two of these seven charters *magister*, 'teacher,' and living in the secular world rather than in a monastic community, probably served as a secular canon at Saint George's College in Oxford.³ Because another Oxford lecturer named Theobald of Étampes used this title of *magister* as early as 1101–17, medieval Latin specialist Michael J. Curley interprets Geoffrey's use of it as indicating that he was a teacher in one of the clerical schools in Oxford, probably Saint George's.⁴ Geoffrey's membership in this

particular secular college becomes even more likely in light of the fact that Archdeacon Walter of Oxford—the person whom Geoffrey claims gave him the ancient British book he translated as *The History of the Kings of Britain*—was the provost there.⁵

Living in Oxford and serving as a secular canon, Geoffrey belonged to a group of “clerical scholars and administrators, not priests” who resided within the new Norman-built castle there.⁶ This group included scholars, noblemen, and high-ranking churchmen all connected to Lincoln and Oxford, among them Bishop Alexander of Lincoln (to whom Geoffrey dedicated the *Prophecies of Merlin* section of his history) and Archdeacon Walter.⁷ As Stephen Knight has noted, to be located in Oxford gave Geoffrey access to “a Norman power-base” that King Henry I had developed; there the historian likely functioned as part of the “clerical apparatus” that served the “legal, fiscal and administrative” hub of Norman government.⁸ One form of service to this government could have been Geoffrey’s translation of Merlin’s prophecies into Latin for Bishop Alexander, for the bishop had good reason to want more information about his Welsh enemies: following King Henry I’s death, prophecies of the Britons’ regaining control not just of Wales but of all Britain had begun to circulate in Wales.⁹ Another form of service to the Norman government could have been Geoffrey’s composition of *The History of the Kings of Britain*.

In addition to his long-term residence in Oxford, what little other information survives about Geoffrey of Monmouth associates him with the key players in Norman politics, and possibly with Matilda’s faction in particular. Given that he became a bishop, Geoffrey had to have had connections with and the favor of the Norman elite. Unusually, however, he accepted ordination quite late in his life (at Westminster, on February 16, 1152) and consecration as Bishop of Saint Asaph only eight days later.¹⁰ This sequence of events suggests that he had no previous position in the church hierarchy, thereby corroborating other evidence of his pursuing an academic rather than an ecclesiastical career for most of his life. Another possible indication of Geoffrey’s lack of interest in serving the church is that he left behind no record of ever residing in, or even visiting, his bishopric.¹¹ Furthermore, the bishopric was likely Geoffrey’s reward for service (perhaps in the form of writing his history) and/or an incentive for him to support the future King Henry II: Geoffrey was only the second person to occupy this see of Saint Asaph, a see that did not appear in the records until the generation just before Geoffrey’s accession and lacked a bishop because of its reputed “desolation and barbarousness,” and he appears to have used his position as bishop to advance the interests of Norman nobles rather than to fulfill a pastoral function.¹² The fact that

Saint Asaph was a “relatively minor episcopacy” increases the likelihood that it was a reward for political service rather than a means of ecclesiastical service.¹³

Geoffrey’s last recorded act likewise associates him with the Norman elite, particularly with Matilda’s faction. This act was to sign, as *Galfrido de S. Asaph episcopo* ‘Geoffrey, Bishop of Saint Asaph,’ the 1153 Westminster charter that recognized the future Henry II, Empress Matilda’s son, as King Stephen’s heir.¹⁴ By serving as the final witness of this charter, Geoffrey of Monmouth joined his fellow bishops in enabling Matilda to win, or at least not lose, her power struggle with her cousin Stephen.¹⁵ Even if this signature simply validated much-needed peace, Geoffrey’s emphasis on the appropriateness of supporting the king’s designated heir, both in the dedicatory preface to and in references throughout his history, suggests that he was a supporter of Henry I’s intended line of succession: Matilda and her son Henry. Nevertheless, regardless of how he earned his episcopal reward, Geoffrey of Monmouth was a rarity (particularly for Stephen’s reign during which bishops tended to be drawn from among the ecclesiastical clerks): a secular canon who received a bishopric for his scholarly work.¹⁶

Although there is general agreement about how to categorize Geoffrey’s history, there is no consensus among Galfridian specialists regarding his specific purpose in writing it. Hanning’s 1966 demonstration that Geoffrey, unlike Gildas and Bede, offered medieval “readers a comprehensive and spectacular vision of the British past largely free of Christian assumptions” continues to serve as a foundation for interpretations of the text, for most scholars view *The History of the Kings of Britain* as secular in focus compared to other medieval histories.¹⁷ Concerning the purpose of this secular history, however, there is a wide range of opinions, including that of John Gillingham that Geoffrey’s account of the greatness of the early Britons might have encouraged Welsh resistance to Norman aggression and nurtured the belief that the Britons might successfully resist Norman dominance.¹⁸

Despite the merits of this as well as other interpretations of Geoffrey’s purpose, historian Paul Dalton has presented a great deal of evidence to support his view of Geoffrey as a man who wrote “an intensely topical work, which sought to use history and prophecy to promote peace by warning the Anglo-Norman aristocracy of the dangers of civil war.”¹⁹ Literature specialists who study *The History of the Kings of Britain* also tend to view it as topical, interpreting Geoffrey’s call for political unity as responding directly to the division of the Norman nobles into pro-Matilda and pro-Stephen factions and his narrative of Briton ‘empire’-building as echoing, and likely offering support for, Norman imperial ambitions.²⁰

This critical stance is consistent with the particular way in which Geoffrey presents the past to his readers.

Geoffrey suggests his support of the Norman 'empire' through the details he includes in his narrative. He not only adds the Normans to Bede's list of peoples that inhabit the island of Britain but also positions the Normans at the head of this list (5.42–44); these details could indicate that Geoffrey is following Norman historian Dudo of Saint-Quentin in presenting the Normans as God's chosen people, the "new Israelites."²¹ Furthermore, because Geoffrey praises the Britons as possessing dominion over the whole island until their arrogance resulted in their conceding Britain to the Picts and Saxons (5.44–46), the order in which he presents those peoples (Normans, Britons, Saxons, Picts, and then Scots) offers Norman readers three potential forms of flattery.²² First, Geoffrey's pairing the Normans with the Britons at the beginning of the list is consistent with a view that Britons and Normans shared: that their common Trojan ancestry made the Norman Conquest less culturally disruptive than the invasions of the Saxons and Danes.²³ Second, if readers assume that the peoples are arranged hierarchically, then the Normans' position signals both their current possession of dominion over Britain and their advanced civilization, the Britons' position their former and perhaps future dominion as well as their formerly great civilization, the Saxons' position their military success despite their status as non-Christians, and the Picts' and Scots' lowly positions their crushing defeats by Roman and Briton troops as well as their supposed barbarity.²⁴ Third and finally, as the list-toppers, the Normans are implicitly the mightiest of the European conquerors, for they are greater than the ancient Britons who—according to Geoffrey's idiosyncratic account—defeated Rome three times and twice conquered the great city itself.²⁵

Geoffrey's description of the island of Britain offers another form of flattery to the Normans, for—unlike his predecessors Gildas and Bede—Geoffrey emphasizes Britain's proximity and connection to France; consequently, he can present Norman possession of the island as natural. He begins his description of the island as "inter Galliam et Hiberniam [between France and Ireland]" (*HRB* 5.24–25), thereby creating an impression of proximity. In contrast to Geoffrey, Gildas positions Britain near the end of the known world while Bede positions it at a significant distance from Germany, Gaul, and Spain.²⁶ Proximity then becomes connection in *The History of the Kings of Britain* when—unlike Gildas who says that Britain is surrounded by waters both "diffusiore [extensive]" and often "intransmeabili undique [utterly impassable]," except for the English Channel—Geoffrey associates the Channel with a whole system of waterways that facilitates travel between the island

and the European continent.²⁷ As a result, it seems natural that “freto, quo ad Gallias nauigatur [by this channel one sails to France]” (5.34–35). In addition, by moving from this detail straight into a description of trade that brings goods “ex uniuersis nationibus [from all countries],” Geoffrey encourages readers to view Britain’s links with the Continent positively (5.37).

More specifically, by presenting both the geographical and the commercial links between France and Britain in a single sentence, Geoffrey naturalizes the island’s communication with France. His description integrates France (in a literal sense) into Britain’s landscape: “Porro lacubus atque piscosis fluuiis irrigua est et absque meridianae plagae freto, quo ad Gallias nauigatur, tria nobilia flumina, Tamensis uidelicet et Sabrinae nec non et Humbri, uelut tria brachia extendit, quibus transmarina commercia ex uniuersis nationibus eidem nauigio feruntur [Moreover, (Britain) is watered by fish-filled ponds and rivers, and from the southern region by a channel one can sail to France; three noble rivers, the Thames and clearly the Severn and also the Humber, stretch out like three arms, and by it across-the-sea wares are carried from all countries by the same ship-transport]” (5.34–38). In addition, the seamless movement within the whole passage from the natural beauty and abundance of Britain, to the prosperity that France and Britain enjoy because of their proximity presents Norman possession of the island and shared commerce across the English Channel as natural aspects of life in Britain, for they seem to predate recorded history. This description even naturalizes the Norman Conquest itself by presenting the island’s southern waterways as reaching out like arms, as if to embrace France and welcome French-speaking settlers.²⁸

Although his description of Britain suggests Geoffrey’s desire to flatter the Norman elite as a group, the prominence Geoffrey gives to Robert of Gloucester’s territories in his history suggests a more specific desire: to flatter Earl Robert, who in late May 1138 officially became Empress Matilda’s partner in the struggle to win the throne that was hers by hereditary right. According to Knight, Robert “was no doubt known to Geoffrey partly through his elevated position and also partly through links with Oxford, his role as Lord of Glamorgan and his contact with Llandaff, then the seat of the diocese including Monmouth.”²⁹ The earl’s pivotal role in Norman politics is the most likely explanation for the many references in Geoffrey’s history to Robert’s holdings in Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, and Cornwall, and the persistence of these references suggests both that Geoffrey knew Robert’s holdings well enough to describe them in reasonable detail and that he attempted

to show those holdings—and through them their owner—in a positive light.³⁰

Geoffrey's apparent effort to flatter Matilda's half-brother is one that J. S. P. Tatlock, noting the abundant and positive geographical references to areas controlled by Earl Robert of Gloucester in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, identified over half a century ago.³¹ Cornwall gets glorified through the key Arthurian events that occur there: Arturus's conception, mortal wounding, and handing over the kingdom to Constantinus who is the son of Duke Cadur of Cornwall (137.462–512, 178.81–84). Similarly, Monmouth gains status from Geoffrey's relocating a pivotal event, the death of King Vortegirnus, from Demetia in South Wales (where *The History of the British* locates it) to the fortress of Little Doward (Cloartius) on the banks of the Wye River, close to Monmouth—a region which was under Robert's jurisdiction from the time he became earl in 1122 until his death in 1147.³² Monmouth receives further glorification when Geoffrey has Aurelius's men find Merlinus at the Galabes Spring, which Tatlock notes is a place near Monmouth.³³ Furthermore, as Curley has noted, Geoffrey gives prominence to the city of Gloucester itself by making it one of the major cities of Arthurian Britain as well as an episcopal see—despite its lacking a bishop until long after Geoffrey's day.³⁴ The consistent prominence Geoffrey gives to Earl Robert's territories in *The History of the Kings of Britain* supports what studies of its textual transmission suggest: that Robert was its original and primary dedicatee.³⁵

Geoffrey's systematic flattery of Robert of Gloucester is likely a function of the generally accepted date of his history's completion: late 1138.³⁶ Although surviving evidence cannot clarify at what point before the December 1135 death of King Henry I Geoffrey of Monmouth began composing his history, it is clear that he had completed the composition process by January 1139 when fellow historian Henry of Huntingdon learned of its existence while visiting the Norman abbey of Le Bec. More specifically, the current scholarly consensus is that Geoffrey completed it in 1138, shortly before its discovery.³⁷ Historian Neil Wright has argued for a completion date no earlier than 1138 because Henry of Huntingdon, a historian who actively sought out new sources of information, knew nothing of Geoffrey's history until he visited Le Bec in January 1139; furthermore, Wright concludes that this diligent seeker of research materials would not have remained ignorant of a major historical source for long, thus making an earlier completion date unlikely.³⁸ Michael D. Reeve, recent editor of Geoffrey's history, likewise supports a later composition date for two reasons: had Geoffrey's history been published as early as 1135, Henry of Huntingdon would not have reported being astonished to

discover it in 1139; and a completion date of 1135 “seems too early” given that “the double dedications certainly presuppose Henry’s death and the single dedication is most naturally read as presupposing it.”³⁹

Surviving evidence, discussed below, that Geoffrey revised his dedication at least once likewise makes a later composition date more likely than an earlier one. A completion date of late 1138 would have encouraged Geoffrey both to flatter the man who, shortly after May 22 of that year, had officially changed his allegiance from King Stephen to Empress Matilda and to create a pro-Matilda version of the British past. By that point in time, Stephen’s tactical errors as a leader had caused a major shift of loyalties from the usurper Stephen to the legitimate heir Matilda.⁴⁰ Twelfth-century historians Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni record twelve barons “as bursting into opposition to King Stephen after Easter 1138,” including Robert of Gloucester, a half-dozen Welshmen, and two barons from Somerset (an area Robert controlled).⁴¹ The situation is one that Dalton summarizes based on Vitalis’s account: once it was known that Earl Robert had joined his half-sister’s faction, “many castellans and bishops—Robert’s *favorites*—including barons from England and the Welsh Marches and the Welsh prince Morgan ab Owain, rebelled against Stephen and were assisted by David, king of Scots, who invaded England.”⁴² A completion date of late 1138, therefore, positions *The History of the Kings of Britain* as a response to the historical moment at which a civil war between Empress Matilda and King Stephen had become inevitable: in September of 1139, Matilda would arrive in England to begin her military campaign for the English throne.⁴³

Geoffrey’s Narratorial Intrusions and the Empress’s Faction

Geoffrey of Monmouth has rightly been identified as an unobtrusive narrator compared to other historians of his time.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, when Geoffrey chooses to interrupt and comment upon his narrative of the British past, he does so in a dramatic and politically charged way. One prominent example occurs at the moment of King Arturus’s betrayal by his nephew, when Geoffrey makes a comment that positions him as a supporter of the royal successor whom the previous king has designated. Another occurs at the very end of his history when he makes a comment about his fellow historians, one that positions him as a scholar who is seeking patronage and wishes to assert the authority of an alternate version of British history. The first example is the most famous of Geoffrey’s narratorial intrusions because it concerns Modredus’s betrayal of his uncle and king. Two aspects of this interruption are noteworthy: Geoffrey asserts that he will not remain silent about Modredus’s treason,

and he addresses this announcement to a “consul auguste [noble earl]” whom most Galfridian specialists identify as Earl Robert of Gloucester, half-brother and key supporter of Empress Matilda (177.1–5).⁴⁵ To Norman readers, the fact that the traitor is a nephew of the king might have suggested parallels between Modredus and the usurper King Stephen as well as between Arturus and King Henry I, just as the direct address to the “noble earl”—with its implication that the addressee should feel outrage at this usurpation—might have suggested Earl Robert as its referent (177.1). This interruption suggests that Geoffrey supports the legitimate successor.

Through the second example, Geoffrey’s voice intrudes into the narrative again—and just as dramatically—when he inserts a personal comment that positions him as seeking the patronage of Norman aristocrats, and perhaps of Robert of Gloucester himself. In a colophon, Geoffrey grants to Caradoc of Llancarfan the subject matter of the Welsh kings and to William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon that of the Saxon kings, but he aggressively asserts his exclusive right to tell the story of the British kings (208.601–5). Given that William of Malmesbury had Robert of Gloucester as a friend and patron and Henry of Huntingdon had been commissioned by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln to write a history of the English, Geoffrey probably felt he had to demarcate his historiographical territory.⁴⁶ Geoffrey justifies his privileged position through the claim that Archdeacon Walter of Oxford gave him an ancient British book that, through the act of translation, he has transformed into *The History of the Kings of Britain* (208.605–7). This claim enables him to assert the authority of the alternate version of British history that his book offers to the Norman nobility.

However, in three extensive narratorial intrusions, Geoffrey associates himself more strongly with key players in the impending civil war than he does in the intrusions already discussed and suggests that he favored Matilda’s faction over Stephen’s. These more substantial intrusions are his dedicatory preface to the book, his diatribe about the foolishness of civil war, and the lengthy *Prophecies of Merlin* section that begins with its own dedicatory preface and provides an additional example of Geoffrey’s historiographical approach—an approach that not only includes female figures but also uses some of them to correct male excesses.

The survival of four different versions of the dedication appended to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*—a single dedication in which the name of the dedicatee is left blank, two double dedications (one to Robert of Gloucester and Waleran of Meulan, and the other to King Stephen and Robert), and a single dedication naming Robert only—has led scholars down divergent interpretive paths.⁴⁷

One path takes as its starting point the assumption that three, if not all four, of these versions are Geoffrey's compositions. If the Robert-only and the two double dedications are, as Wright suggests, "the work of Geoffrey himself," then the historian might have revised the dedication in response to rapid changes in political circumstances during the mid-to-late 1130s—a prominent example of such a change being Robert of Gloucester's public transfer of allegiance from Stephen to Matilda that reversed his earlier acceptance, within a few months of the coronation, of Stephen's possession of the throne and "remain[ing] a loyal, if disgruntled, vassal of the king" until 1138.⁴⁸ If Geoffrey revised the text, then the three named dedications reflect what Galfridian specialist Nikolai Tolstoy calls the historian's "sensitivity to shifts in the balance of power," and the variation in dedicatees had two probable purposes: to encourage peace (whether by means of a general call for political unity or a figurative modeling of peace through the rearranging of patron names) and to solicit patronage for his scholarly efforts—even if the changes of dedicatee(s) constitute "covering his bets."⁴⁹

Geoffrey's expression of disappointment, at the beginning of the *Vita Merlini*, that dedicating *The Prophecies of Merlin* to Bishop Alexander of Lincoln (the diocese in which Geoffrey, as a resident of Oxford, lived) did not yield him tangible benefits suggests that he actively sought patronage and advancement and was willing to change his allegiance to gain them.⁵⁰ If the blank version of the dedication, despite its uncertain position within the textual history of the work, is credited to Geoffrey, it could reflect either the author's desire to address a member of the Norman nobility not named in the other three versions (even Matilda herself) or his inability to guess at a particular point in time what his most strategic choice of dedicatee was.⁵¹ The volatile political situation from December 1135 through late 1138 would have encouraged both Geoffrey's subtle presentation of his political leanings and his request for protection from the second dedicatee in the double dedications.

The other interpretive path takes as its starting point the assumption that not all versions of the dedication are Geoffrey's; as a result, it opens up various interpretive possibilities but leads to the conclusion that Geoffrey was more likely to have supported Matilda's faction than Stephen's. Recent evaluation of the four extant versions of the dedication confers less authority on the blank and Stephen–Robert versions than on the other two. In his introduction to the 2007 critical edition of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Reeve dismisses the blank version (which does not name the dedicatee) as "a corrupt form of the dedication to Robert alone" and the Stephen–Robert version as the product of "a clumsy adjustment" to the Robert–Waleran one.⁵² The blank version is problematic because

in it Earl Robert's name "has been clumsily suppressed," a fact that raises questions about whether Geoffrey wrote this anomalous version of the dedication.⁵³ Furthermore, Reeve articulates the scholarly consensus that this version is a "meaningless truncation of the usual dedication [that] can never have been meant to serve as a 'nameless dedication,' but must have arisen by simple omission."⁵⁴ As a likely product of scribal error, this version lacks authority and therefore should be set aside. The Stephen–Robert version, however, is likewise problematic both because it "is manifestly a re-working of that to Robert and Waleran"—perhaps even a "lazily" executed recasting—and because it survives in a unique and "very corrupt" manuscript.⁵⁵ Consequently, it possesses less authority than the Robert-only and Robert–Waleran ones.⁵⁶

The possibility that the Stephen–Robert dedication is not the work of Geoffrey himself opens up a range of interpretive options. If rejected as non-Galfridian, as both Reeve and fellow Geoffrey of Monmouth expert Ernst Brugger recommend, then it is the work of a redactor.⁵⁷ This redactor might have wished to correct Geoffrey's choice of primary dedicatee, Robert of Gloucester, by offering a presentation copy with King Stephen in the position of first dedicatee and Robert demoted to second position.⁵⁸ However, even if the Stephen–Robert version is credited to Geoffrey, it poses an interpretive challenge because it reflects what appears to be the minimal modification necessary to adapt "one of the most difficult and self-consciously rhetorical passages" in the history to the new dedicatee(s).⁵⁹ Such minimal revising on Geoffrey's part suggests either that he valued his highly crafted prose so greatly that he chose not to write a new dedication specifically for the king, or that he favored the earl more than the king. Furthermore, if Geoffrey thought it appropriate to put King Stephen into Earl Robert's position in the double dedication, it is unlikely that he supported Stephen. Given historian David N. Dumville's mention of the possibility that Stephen might not have welcomed what he saw in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, perhaps the king noticed the mismatch between a text favoring Robert and Matilda and a dedication to himself, or simply took offense at sharing the dedicatory spotlight with an illegitimate cousin who had the power to be a kingmaker.⁶⁰ It is even possible that Geoffrey hastily appended this minimally revised dedication to his book in an attempt to prevent or lessen the king's displeasure at the original dedicatee and/or the volume's content when it first began to circulate.

Dumville's analysis of the Stephen–Robert version entails another interpretive possibility. The historian concludes that the Stephen–Robert version's implicit definition of the king as a "regni nostri columna [pillar of our realm]" is inappropriate; this conclusion suggests that Geoffrey

viewed Stephen's reign as an illegitimate and/or temporary situation, and Stephen himself as a Norman baron bound by the same code of honor as Waleran and Robert to keep his oath to Empress Matilda.⁶¹ Therefore, whether or not the Stephen–Robert version of the dedication is Geoffrey's, its content and manner of preservation suggest that the historian's political sympathies lay with Matilda and her supporters.

The general agreement that the original version of Geoffrey's dedication was either to Robert alone or to Robert and Waleran confers on these two versions significant authority, making them the more reliable bases upon which to develop an impression of Geoffrey of Monmouth's political leaning.⁶² Although Geoffrey's apparent address to Robert at the moment of Modredus's betrayal makes the Robert-only version the more likely original, the more significant fact is that Geoffrey positions Robert—who was never a firm supporter of Stephen and who in mid-1138 became Matilda's main supporter—as his primary dedicatee in the Robert–Waleran version.⁶³ Robert's status as Geoffrey's primary dedicatee is consistent with Curley's nomination of the earl as the dedicatee “most likely to have read Geoffrey's book”: some time before 1147, the earl lent a copy of it to Walter Espec of Helmsley, who then lent it to Raul Fitz Gilbert and his wife Cunstance, who then gave it to historian Geoffrey Gaimar as a source for the now lost portion of his *Estoire des Engleis*.⁶⁴ In addition, the fact that Earl Robert put the book into circulation suggests that he approved of its content.

Waleran's appearance in the more authoritative version of the double dedication is likewise consistent with evidence of the transmission of Geoffrey's history, for the text “was indeed read in Waleran's immediate circle”: Bishop Philip de Harcourt, “Waleran's clerical *protégé*, left a copy of it to the library of the abbey of Bec.”⁶⁵ Earl Waleran's appearance in the dedication with Earl Robert is appropriate given that he was “another magnate with a great reputation as a reader” whose extant letters attest to his learnedness and whose place among the descendants of Charlemagne Geoffrey acknowledges (4.10–17).⁶⁶

It is, however, Geoffrey's phrasing in both the Robert-only and Robert–Waleran versions of his dedication that suggests his support for the legitimate heir, Matilda. In the Robert-only version, Geoffrey emphasizes both the earl's status as King Henry I's son and his possession of “innata probitas in militia [natural integrity in bravery],” presumably inherited from his father (3.21–22). In addition, Geoffrey defines greatness in terms of King Henry's character and direct bloodline by labeling Robert “alterum Henricum [a second Henry]” (3.22). This label encourages Robert to be a loyal son and fulfill his father's wishes. In the double dedication, Geoffrey's choice of terminology encourages both noblemen

to honor Henry I's wishes and to keep their oaths to Matilda.⁶⁷ By portraying Robert once again as "*alterum Henricum* [another Henry]" who is worthy of leading troops into battle (3.22) and Waleran as "*altera regni nostri columpna* [another pillar of our kingdom]" (4.3–4), he encourages them to unite behind the king's choice of heir. Furthermore, by describing both men as honorable and (like King Henry who was nicknamed Beauclerk) learned, Geoffrey appeals to their best qualities in the hope that they will behave as twin pillars of the kingdom of King Henry and his heir (3.21–22, 4.13–27). Geoffrey's decision to address the heads of the "two leading factions" at Stephen's court reveals him to be "an intelligent observer" of the political situation.⁶⁸ It also suggests that Geoffrey knew both that Waleran was a key supporter of Stephen and that, without Robert's support, Stephen would struggle to retain the throne. Robert's 1138 change of allegiance had transferred Caen and Bayeux to Matilda's faction, putting Stephen in a weak position.⁶⁹

Given the kingmaking power of both Robert and Waleran, the Robert–Waleran and Robert-only versions can be read as bearers of coded political advice. Whether Geoffrey wrote the Robert–Waleran dedication before or after Robert's official transfer of allegiance in the spring of 1138 that nullified his earlier acceptance of Stephen as his king in April 1136, it encourages the two men's support of Henry I's direct line.⁷⁰ Although Crouch assumes that Geoffrey's reference to Robert and Waleran as pillars of the kingdom had to have been made when both were supporting King Stephen (in 1136 or 1137), Geoffrey could just as easily have been addressing two men in different factions.⁷¹

The timing of the Robert–Waleran version's composition, however, would have determined both its meaning and possible effect. If Geoffrey wrote the double dedication and Robert read it before he officially defied Stephen's authority and joined Matilda's faction in late May 1138, then the dedication might have encouraged the earl's change of allegiance. In other words, Geoffrey's praise of Robert could have been anticipatory, just as his praise of Waleran (who remained a staunch supporter of King Stephen until 1141 and, even when he changed factions, left his earldom of Worcester to his royalist twin brother to administer) could have been.⁷² If composed and read after the earl's change of allegiance, the double dedication might well have pleased Robert for validating his choice to honor his oath, just as the book as a whole would have pleased him both through its flattering references to his holdings and through its positive presentation of female rule that implicitly validates the reign of Matilda to which Robert was committed. If addressed to "men who newly found themselves enemies" in order to offer "a powerful, if covert, plea for unity," the Robert–Waleran dedication is consistent with the

anti-civil-war theme that dominates throughout the book, encouraging support for Matilda as her father's designated heir.⁷³

The Robert-only dedication entails similar interpretive possibilities: encouragement of Robert to support his father's designated heir, Matilda, if composed before he officially began to support his half-sister's cause, and praise for a decision to honor his oath if composed after his change of faction. Dumville offers still another interpretive possibility: if the Robert-only version was composed after the Robert-Waleran one, then "it would have to reflect either Geoffrey's rapidly throwing in his lot with the anti-Stephen cause...or rapid accommodation to local political realities."⁷⁴ Regardless of which of these two versions Geoffrey composed first, however, the Robert-Waleran and Robert-only texts suggest Geoffrey of Monmouth's support of Matilda rather than Stephen. Both the content of the two narratorial intrusions still to be discussed and the positive portraits of female rulers that appear at key points in the history's main narrative support this conclusion.

Although no extant version of the dedication to *The History of the Kings of Britain* names Empress Matilda, it is worth noting that Geoffrey's history was a text that she could have read.⁷⁵ Van Houts has gathered substantial evidence of Matilda's knowledge of Latin. The empress brought some Latin chronicles to England from Germany in 1126, bequeathed two gospel manuscripts to Le Bec (where, in 1139, Henry of Huntingdon had discovered the existence of Geoffrey's history) in 1167, and was the dedicatee of Latin chronicles by Hugh of Fleury and William of Malmesbury.⁷⁶ In addition, a letter of 1164 from Nicholas of Mont-aux-Malades to Thomas Becket describes how Empress Matilda became familiar with the *Constitutions of Clarendon*—the core document involved in Henry II's dispute with Becket—by ordering Nicholas to read the Latin document aloud to her before explaining it in French, "a gesture that suggests that she could perfectly understand the Latin language" and that provides "incontrovertible evidence that the Empress was able to cope with Latin prose narrative."⁷⁷ Given the empress's linguistic competencies and her close relationship with Robert of Gloucester, she could have read Geoffrey's history—and perhaps Geoffrey composed it in the expectation that she would do so. If she did read it, she would have taken interest in what appears to be a coded reference to her in Geoffrey's diatribe about civil war.

After the wounded Arturus has gone to Avalon and the Britons have suffered under kings who eagerly participate in civil wars, Geoffrey inserts a passionate and extended direct address to the Britons (178.82–84, 181.105–185.141). Although the message that internecine warfare causes political instability and terrible destruction is evident throughout

his narrative of the British past, the dangers of factionalism receive their strongest expression here.⁷⁸ In addition, while berating the Britons for dividing the kingdom and thus making the invasion of “paganis [barbarians]” possible, Geoffrey implicitly berates the Normans as well, for the word *posterī* means both ‘descendants [the Britons]’ and ‘successors [the Normans]’ (185.150–51):

Quid, ociosa gens pondere inmanium scelerum oppressa, quid semper ciuilia proelia siciens tete domesticis in tantum debilitasti motibus, quae cum prius longe posita regna potestati tuae subdidisses nunc uelut bona uinea degenerata in amaritudinem uersa patriam, coniuges, liberos nequeas ab inimicis tueri? Age ergo, age ciuile discidium, parum intelligens euangelicum illud “omne regnum in se ipsum diuisum desolabitur, et domus supra domum cadet.” Quia ergo regnum tuum in se diuisum fuit, quia furor ciuilis discordiae et liuoris fumus mentem tuam hebetauit, quia superbia tua uni regi oboedientiam ferre non permisit, cernis iccirco patriam tuam ab impiissimis paganis desolatam, domos etiam eiusdem supra domos ruentes, quod posterī tui in futurum lugebunt. Videbunt etenim barbarae leaenae catulos oppida, ciuitates atque ceteras eorundem possessiones optinere, ex quibus misere expulsi prioris dignitatis statum uel numquam uel uix recuperabunt. (185.141–186.154)

[Why, idle nation crushed by the weight of monstrous sins, why are you always thirsty for civil wars that cripple you so much through internal disturbances, you who earlier placed distantly positioned realms under your power, but now—just like a good vineyard that has degenerated into bitterness—are unable to protect your native land, your wives, or children from your enemies? Urge, therefore, urge your civil discord, understanding too little what the gospel says: “every kingdom divided against itself will be empty of people, and house will topple upon house.” Therefore, because your kingdom is divided against itself, because passion for civil discord and the smoke of spite have dulled your mind, because your pride has not allowed you to obey a single king, you can discern that, on that account, your native land has been decimated by most wicked pagans, and its houses fall upon houses, a situation which your descendants will lament in the future. And indeed, they will see the cubs of the barbarian lioness get hold of their towns, cities, and the rest of their possessions, and, because of these events, as miserable exiles they will never—or only just—regain their former status.]

Responding to the reigns of the post-Arthurian kings in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, this passage blames the Britons for the Saxons’ gaining dominion over the island. However, the passage’s main message—that the willingness to engage in civil war and the refusal “to obey a single king” lead to loss of sovereignty—would have had particular resonance

for Geoffrey's readers in 1138 as well as during the early years of the civil war Matilda and Stephen fought. In the years 1138 and 1139, political and church leaders in England tried to use legatine councils (and perhaps a January 1139 gathering near Oxford that Geoffrey attended) to bring peace.⁷⁹ These readers would have had to consider the possibility that, by refusing to unite behind a single ruler, they—like the Britons—could bring about their own political ruin.

Moreover, Geoffrey's portrait of "the barbarian lioness" (that, in the context of the historical narrative, represents the Saxons) would likewise have had particular resonance for a Norman aristocratic audience (185.152). On the one hand, this "barbarian lioness" could be any invading enemy force that might choose to take advantage of a civil war among Norman nobles in order to gain sovereignty over the island, and the image of the Saxons stripping the Britons of their possessions and relegating them to a position of permanent political impotence encourages the Normans to unite behind one king-candidate. Geoffrey's final commentary about how the Saxons were able to defeat the Britons and gain dominion over the island of Britain because the Saxons, unlike the Britons, kept peace among themselves presents this political moral to the Normans in a way that they would have found difficult to ignore (207.594–600).

On the other hand, this "barbarian lioness" and "her cubs" could have evoked a more specific fear of the Norman barons: that a group close to the Normans yet seen as alien—the Angevins, to whom Empress Matilda was bound by her second marriage—would succeed to Norman holdings in both England and Normandy. However, because the reference to the lioness (Matilda) and her cubs (her three sons) appears in a passage that, unusually for Geoffrey, uses biblical paraphrase to give his warning authority, Matilda's impending reign becomes an expression of God's will.⁸⁰ If readers associate this lioness with the "leo iusticiae [lion of justice]" that appears in *The Prophecies of Merlin*, then she and her sons are the king's (probably King Henry's) heirs (113.78). Such dramatic phrasing reveals that Geoffrey's attempts to intervene in Norman politics do not replicate the straightforward praise of early Norman historians: he castigates as well as flatters the aristocrats with the power to determine who will reign in England.⁸¹ Nevertheless, because he is writing his history when the civil war is about to begin, Geoffrey is not foolish enough to side openly with either king-candidate. Instead, he reinforces the idea of supporting a single ruler, and—given the outrage he expresses at Modredus's usurpation and his history's consistent support for the king's designated and legitimate heir—presumably the legitimate one. He simultaneously

presents the transfer of power to Empress Matilda and her sons as an event for which prophecy supplies preparation.

The *Prophecies of Merlin* section, because of its length and insertion at the midpoint of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, constitutes the most dramatic of Geoffrey's interruptions of his narrative of early British rulers. Although its dedication openly flatters Bishop Alexander of Lincoln by claiming that he has the greatest literary skill of any man in Britain, the prophecies themselves become so obscure that one modern historian has dismissed them as "utterly unintelligible" (110.18–20).⁸² Despite the irresolvable problem of their increasing opacity, however, the prophecies fit three patterns present throughout Geoffrey's history. First, they open with a clear statement of Merlinus's (and perhaps Geoffrey's) pro-Briton political bias: the well-known contrast between the red dragon, representing the Britons, and the white dragon, representing the Saxons—a people that inflicts both political and religious oppression on the Britons (112.34–38). This pro-Briton sentiment receives expression elsewhere, such as when Merlinus says that foreigners will fill the land, and the red dragon "languebit [will languish]" (112.63–64). Second, the prophecies prepare for the appearance of the history's most important figure, Arturus, by describing the "aper... Cornubiae [boar... of Cornwall]" as not only saving the Britons from Saxon oppression but also conquering both "insulae oceani [islands of the ocean]" and "Gallicanos saltus [French woodland-pastures]" (112.39–41). This description even prefigures Arturus's final actions, saying, "Tremebit Romulea domus saeuicium ipsius, et exitus eius dubius erit [The house of Romulus will tremble at his ferocity, and his death will be uncertain]" (112.42). Third, the admonitory tone of the prophecies reflects content that Siân Echard defines as "overwhelmingly concerned with the rise and fall of rulers, and with the social and religious dislocation that this cycle provokes."⁸³

Despite their conforming to broad patterns at work in Geoffrey's book, *The Prophecies of Merlin* defy straightforward mapping of particular rulers onto its list of animal stand-ins for human beings. Nevertheless, given the strong evidence of their circulation separate from *The History of the Kings of Britain* before King Henry I's death in 1135 as well as of Orderic Vitalis's reading them before 1135–36 and interpreting some of them as foretelling events in Norman history, *The Prophecies* can be interpreted as supplying Geoffrey's readers with a foretaste of his manner of linking the present with both the past and the future.⁸⁴ Geoffrey's approach to historiography anticipates what Ad Putter has identified as the "mak[ing] way for romance" evident in works of the later Middle Ages.⁸⁵ More specifically, *The Prophecies of Merlin* inject into a narrative dominated by military

struggles for power a huge dose of the fantastic, one that involves female figures in meaningful and striking ways. This lengthy intrusion into the main narrative, however, emulates the rest of the non-Arthurian material in Geoffrey's history: it invokes Norman anxieties about the issue of succession while presenting female figures as necessary correctives to the foolish and destructive actions of males.

Although they include one reference to feminine pride and two references to female victimization, *The Prophecies of Merlin* use imagery that subtly presents Empress Matilda as a more appropriate choice of ruler than Stephen.⁸⁶ Early on in the prophecies, a statement appears that, given *The Prophecies'* opening contrast between the red and white dragons (112.34–35) and Geoffrey's diatribe involving the lioness and her cubs (185.141–186.154), Norman readers could have associated with the empress: “Exurget iterum albus draco et filiam Germaniae inuitabit [The white dragon will rise in revolt again and summon/invite the daughter of Germany]” (112.63). This statement seems to suggest that Matilda was invited, even summoned, from her home in the German-speaking Holy Roman Empire to rule the disordered island of Britain. Her role as her father's designated heir was clearly King Henry I's attempt to achieve orderly succession after his death. Nevertheless, this statement about the daughter of Germany also demonstrates the slipperiness of Galfridian prophecy, for the white dragon that originally represented the Saxons now appears to represent not only the Germanic tribes known today as the Anglo-Saxons but also two other ‘German’ groups: the leaders of the Holy Roman Empire to whom Empress Matilda was connected through her first marriage, and the Norman line established by her father in which the Germanic bloodlines of both Franks and Anglo-Saxons were combined, and of which Matilda was the only legitimate representative.

When Merlinus applies the term ‘German’ to Norman nobles, Empress Matilda again emerges as the better king-candidate. Merlinus states first that “coronabitur Germanicus uermis [the German worm will be crowned]” (112.65) and then that “vix obtinebit cauernas suas Germanicus draco, quia ultio prodicionis eius superueniet [the German dragon will barely maintain his caves because vengeance will be visited upon his treason]” (113.69–71). It would be easy for readers of the 1130s to interpret these statements as describing King Stephen, for he had committed treason (in wormlike fashion) by failing to honor his oath of fealty to Matilda, and he had struggled from the beginning of his reign to retain the throne. Geoffrey's use of both the flattering (dragon) and unflattering (worm) versions of this animal could be a playful way of implying the usurper's dishonesty and weakness.⁸⁷ In addition, Orderic

Vitalis's often-cited identification of Merlinus's "leo iusticiae [lion of justice]" as King Henry I not only sharpens the contrast between a questionable Stephen and the more virtuous figures of Matilda and Henry but also causes other references in the prophecies to align meaningfully (113.78).⁸⁸

Within the context of an obvious reference to the 1120 drowning of three of Henry's children—"catuli leonis in aequoreos pisces transformabuntur [the cubs of the lion (being) transformed into fish of the ocean]," two comments about an eagle become coded references to Empress Matilda (113.84–85). Her representation as an eagle makes sense both because this bird is a common symbol of nobility and power suggestive of her status as a king's daughter, and because the eagle and dragon both (according to Curley) "stood for Roman civilization itself."⁸⁹ Therefore, Matilda's representation as an eagle symbolizes her status not only as Holy Roman Empress but also as the opponent of Stephen, the dragon and worm. The first of the eagle references is gendered feminine in two ways: the noun *aquila* is feminine, and the activity in which the bird is engaged is nesting (one usually associated with female birds). Furthermore, the fact that this reference immediately follows the mention of the cubs' becoming fish suggests a final triumph of the dead King Henry's wishes: "Et aquila eius super montem Arauium nidificabit [And his eagle will build a nest on Mount Aravius]" (113.85–86). If readers identify this mount with Snowdon in Wales, then the nest might signify Matilda's potential military home base in the Welsh Marches with her half-brother Robert of Gloucester.⁹⁰ Thus, the eagle (Matilda) becomes the embodiment of royal power following the deaths of the lion (Henry) and his cubs (Prince William as well as another son and a daughter).⁹¹

Amid mentions of the island weeping, both factions behaving badly ("omnes ad omnia prouocabuntur [all will be provoked to all things]" (114.88)), and Scotland's rising up in anger, the eagle then reappears in a flattering context: "Deaurabit illud aquila rupti foederis et tertia nidificatione gaudebit [The eagle of the broken pact will gild it (the bridle) and will delight in a third nesting]" (114.91–94).⁹² During the 1130s, Norman readers would probably have construed the "broken pact" as the oaths to the empress that both King Stephen and many Norman barons had failed to honor and, given the narrative context of the eagle's "delight," construed the gilding of the bridle positively. If the bridle represents monarchical power, then Matilda will ennoble or perfect (make golden) the monarchical power that Stephen debased through both his usurpation of the throne and problematic behavior as king. Moreover, if Norman readers interpreted Matilda's life in terms of nestings, then

after her “nestings” within the Holy Roman Empire and Anjou, her third “nesting” would be England. The fact that this is “the last clearly identifiable prophecy” gives it additional emphasis.⁹³ Even the fact that *The Prophecies of Merlin* descend into obscurity after this point is significant: for readers during the early years of the civil war, this text positions Matilda’s reign at the narrative moment at which the past becomes the present.

The two remaining references to female figures in *The Prophecies* are likewise noteworthy because they fit a pattern to which both Geoffrey’s history and his *Life of Merlin* contribute: that females solve the problems and heal the wounds that males cause. The history’s Gewissa, who solves the problem of her husband King Arviragus’s refusal to accept Roman rule, and the poem’s Morgen, who heals the wound King Arturus receives in his civil war against Modredus, both fit this pattern (69.344–71).⁹⁴ In *The Prophecies*, the first reference to a female figure appears within the context of Merlinus’s description of three streams (two of which will kill its drinkers) that will appear in Winchester and then divide the island of Britain into pieces (116.147–51). After an unnamed ‘they’ will attempt to hide the third spring, which causes sudden death and somehow makes the burial of its victims impossible, the Britons will be rescued by a “puella [girl]” who will come from another city and “medelae curam adhibeat [will bring in / use a cure of healing]” (116.155–56). This female healer anticipates the good magic of *The Life of Merlin*’s Morgen who will heal Arturus’s wound, for “quae ut omnes artes inierit, solo anhelitu suo fontes nocuios siccabit [she, having undertaken all her arts, with her breath alone will drain the harmful springs]” (116.156–57). She will then refresh herself with “salubri liquore [healthful liquid]” (116.158), produce evidently magical “passus sulphureos [sulphurous footsteps]” that will burn with “dupplici flamma [double flame],” and “cibum submarinis conficiet [prepare food for the under-water creatures]” (116.160–61). Although a stag will kill this mysterious girl, she receives a good deal of narrative space and performs a rescuer’s task that no male in *The Prophecies of Merlin* appears able to perform (116.162–63).

The second reference to a female figure in *The Prophecies* provides another instance of female healing. After a snake works to spread its “uenenum [poison]” and thereby destroys the harvest as well as causes every person in a particular city to die, a “remedium [remedy]” appears: “quae alumpnam flagellantis [the scourge’s female pupil / daughter]” who “stateram . . . medicinae gestabit et in breui renouabitur insula [will carry a quality-standard . . . of medicine, and in a short time the island will be restored]” (116.267–71). In this example, a girl heals Britain from the

harm done either by her (presumably male) teacher or by her father. Given this girl's relationship with the city of Claudius, she could be Gewissa, who (as discussed below) ends the conflict between her father and husband and heals Britain by bringing peace (69.357–59). One way of reading this prophecy, therefore, is that women supply the medicine of peace. Thus, despite the prophecies' apocalyptic end, their references to female figures associate Empress Matilda with healing Britain from the harm King Stephen has done to it, and unnamed female figures with healing Britain from the harm that men have done to it. If readers link the apocalyptic *Prophecies of Merlin* with the problem of political instability he articulates in his diatribe about civil war, then this terrible end of the world becomes the ultimate demonstration of the destruction that civil war brings.

Female Figures in the Works of Geoffrey's Predecessors

Galfridian scholars including Siân Echard, Valerie I. J. Flint, Robert W. Hanning, and Neil Wright have noted that Geoffrey of Monmouth not only draws upon but also playfully reshapes—and perhaps wittily mocks—the works of his three main historiographical predecessors: Gildas, Bede, and the author of *The History of the British*.⁹⁵ However, whether readers interpret Geoffrey's tone as straightforward, playful, or mocking, he departs from all three of his main sources with regard to his treatment of female figures. Although Geoffrey's predecessors are alike in including few female figures in their versions of the British past, each historian's female figures remain marginal for a different reason: the author of *The History of the British* restricts them to the role of heroine, Gildas dismisses them as embodiments of sin that threaten the salvation of males, and Bede both keeps them within the bounds of traditional gender roles and demeans female holiness even as he praises it.

The decidedly secular *History of the British* claims in its preface to collate information about the British past from various sources, yet it includes few female figures and even these few receive inclusion only as the daughters or wives of famous men.⁹⁶ Within a historiographical framework in which only male names define The Six Ages, all female figures receive merely passing mentions and fit neatly into Maureen Fries's category of heroine: they inspire male action rather than take action themselves.⁹⁷ Both Lavinia and the unnamed wife of Silvius appear in *The History of the British's* account of the founding of Britain, but readers can learn of Lavinia only that she is “filiam Latini, filii Fauni, filii Saturni [the daughter of Latinus, son of Faunus, son of Saturn]” whom Aeneas marries and impregnates: “uxorem duxit, et peperit ei filium nomine

Silvium [he married a wife, and for him she gave birth to a son named Silvius].”⁹⁸ The phrasing of the latter example underscores the traditional idea that a woman’s primary function is to give her husband his son and heir. Silvius’s wife receives mention for her one ‘action’: dying as a result of giving birth to Britto, whom Geoffrey of Monmouth calls Brutus.⁹⁹ Therefore, the female figures in this narrative of early British history enter it only as the wives and mothers of men important to the genealogy that this ninth-century author constructs.

In a similar manner, *The History of the British* mentions the Spanish women who came to Ireland with Partholon and died of the plague as well as Scotta, daughter of Pharaoh, after whom Scotia (later called Ireland) is named.¹⁰⁰ To this historian, the only contributions a woman can make to history are to have a male child, to die with her man, or to have a land named after her. Furthermore, the one female who provides the etymology of a place-name has this honor because she is Pharaoh’s daughter, not because she performs any action worthy of commemoration. Whoever he was, the author of *The History of the British* cannot conceive of females as possessing agency. In contrast, Gildas can do so, but for him female agency is almost always detrimental to males.

Because Gildas reads history through a scriptural lens, he positions himself as a prophet who criticizes the corruption he sees in the world and articulates a distinctly male-centered goal: to draw kings and priests back to God; consequently, his female figures remain nameless abstractions whose influence on males is primarily negative. The only female entity associated with positive outcomes is, not surprisingly, Mother Church. Gildas invokes her twice: once to criticize King Constantinus III’s murder of two young noblemen, and once to castigate King Maglocunus for choosing—after pledging to become a monk—to marry his nephew’s beloved.¹⁰¹ However, this female-gendered abstract concept is the only female figure to which he gives a name: the rest remain representative types. Although Gildas implies his regret at the mistreatment of women when he says, “Rapaces iudices...pupillo non iudicant, causa viduae non ingreditur ad eos [Greedy judges...do not hear the case for the orphan, and the just cause of the widow is not brought before them],” his female figures lack individuation for the simple reason that Gildas views women primarily as inducements for men to sin.¹⁰² In *On the Ruin of Britain*, women are generic: they are the “viduam [widow],” the mother of two murdered noblemen, the lawful wife whom a king rejects, the “impudentis filiae [shameless daughter],” or the “furciferam germanam [gallows-worthy sister]” who has promised to live as a chaste widow but accepts a king’s attentions.¹⁰³ Given these examples, it is clear that Gildas values only those women who are loyal wives and chaste widows: for

him, a widow who does not dedicate herself to God is evil and deserves condemnation.

Gildas's negative assumptions about woman's nature emerge most forcefully, however, in passages in which he conflates femininity with weakness or sin. For example, when branding the cowardly Britons as weak, he simply declares them womanly: "Manusque vinciendae muliebriter protenduntur [And their hands were held out for the fetters in a womanish/effeminate manner]." ¹⁰⁴ In addition, when Gildas praises Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter, the historian assigns a positive meaning to the virgin's death by interpreting the girl as an embodiment of her father's "carnalibus desideriis [carnal desires]." ¹⁰⁵ She is "unicam filiam, quae propria voluptas intellegitur [his only daughter, who is to be understood as a sign of his own pleasure]." ¹⁰⁶ As Gildas begins his account, he lists passages from both the Old and New Testaments that associate women with a materialism that makes them unworthy of entering the kingdom of heaven. Using biblical quotations, Gildas suggests that women demand goods from men and are naturally materialistic: "Num quid obliviscitur virgo ornamenti sui aut sponsa fasciae pectoralis suae? [Does the young woman forget her jewels, or the bride her chest-sash?]." ¹⁰⁷ He then quotes the passage "beatae steriles et ubera quae non lactaverunt [blessed are the barren women and the breasts that have not given suck]" without providing its scriptural context; as a result, readers get the impression that women bring sinners into the world, for the quotation immediately follows a reference to "operarii iniquitatis [workers of injustice]." ¹⁰⁸ Gildas then presents young women who are unprepared (their failure to perform appropriate actions symbolizing their lack of spiritual perfection) as unworthy of God's acceptance: "Quae paratae erant, intraverunt cum eo ad nuptias, postea venerunt et reliquae virgines dicentes: 'domine, domine, aperi nobis'; quibus reponsum fuerat: 'non novi vos' [Those who were prepared came inside with him to the wedding, and afterwards came the remaining virgins saying: 'lord, lord open up for us'; for them there was this reply: 'I do not know you']]." ¹⁰⁹ By following this passage with the statement that those who believe that they are entitled to enter heaven shall be condemned, Gildas once more associates women with both pride and sinfulness.

For Gildas, female figures do not matter as individuals because they all pose the same threat: they can keep a priest or king from achieving spiritual perfection, or even spiritual success. Moreover, because his stated goal is to reform kings and priests, Gildas does not address any of his preaching to women as a group. In *On the Ruin of Britain*, female figures play only minor roles for two reasons: men wield both secular and ecclesiastical power, and it is the salvation of men—not women—that concerns its author.

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is much longer than either *On the Ruin of Britain* or *The History of the British*, so it includes more female figures than they do; nevertheless, the number of females it includes is small relative to the number of males, and the framework within which it presents these females is palpably misogynistic. If readers survey *The Ecclesiastical History*, they discover that the number of male figures appearing in the text exceeds the number of female ones by more than tenfold.¹¹⁰ This ratio signals the marginal position of Bedan females. Although such a ratio is normative for a monastic historian, Bede articulates female inferiority aggressively. He uses Helen of Troy both to exemplify female lust and to contrast with virgin saints, and he uses Eve as a negative example twice: the first time to argue that Eve represents the flesh that took pleasure in committing the first sin—unlike Adam who represents the spirit that consented to that sin, yet unwillingly remains weighed down by fleshly pleasures—and the second time to remind readers that Satan conquered Eve, the evidently weaker sex.¹¹¹ Here then are two female figures, one from secular and the other from sacred historiography, that fit Fries's category of the female counter-hero because they embody dangerous sexuality, moral corruption, and threats to the social order—Helen to the social order of the fallen world and Eve to that of the unfallen one.¹¹²

However, the emblem of the marginal position of female figures in Bede's history is the Blessed Virgin Mary, for she receives little attention and appears to have little power. She receives only passing mentions as the mother of God and Saint Æthelthryth's companion in heaven, the patron of a church of Saint Mary, and an intercessor for Bishop Wilfrid of York; furthermore, Bede mentions the Marian church only to contrast it with one named for Saint Peter, "beatissimi apostolorum principis [the most blessed leader of the apostles]," to where the bones of Bishop Chad of Northumbria and Mercia are translated.¹¹³ In addition, in the case of Bishop Wilfred, Mary's intercessory power appears insufficient to heal him for three reasons: Bede acknowledges her intercession only after noting that God answers the prayers and tears of Wilfrid's disciples and monastic brethren, draws attention to the intercessory work of the brothers who sing psalms and weep during Wilfrid's illness, and presents Wilfrid as having earned his miracle (by converting the South Saxons and evangelizing the Isle of Wight) before Mary intercedes—assurance that Wilfred receives from the archangel Michael in a vision.¹¹⁴ As a result, Mary remains ancillary to the story of a male saint earning his place in heaven and God answering the prayers of Wilfred's male followers. Given Bede's denigration of Helen of Troy and Eve and his belittling of the powers of Mary, it is to be expected that his praise of holy women is both limited and conflicted.

Bede's presentation of holy women not only keeps them in the margins of his narrative about the development of the English church but also undercuts even his most prominent example of female holiness. Although he includes female pilgrims, female saints, and nuns, he mentions female pilgrims only once and does so merely in passing, without identifying any by name.¹¹⁵ In addition, six of the forty-eight female figures present in *The Ecclesiastical History* appear in a hymn rather than in the narrative proper, and—unlike the hymn's dedicatee Æthelthryth—receive only a brief mention for becoming virgin martyrs.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the limited space Bede allots to female saints contrasts sharply with the narrative space he lavishes on the male ones that dominate his account of the English church's development: Peter, Augustine, Columba, Pope Gregory the Great, Aidan, and Cuthbert.¹¹⁷ Consistent with his meager allotment of narrative space to female saints is his attributing to several nuns only limited and indirect demonstrations of holiness: entering heaven by answering a dying boy's call to join him in the afterlife, having a vision of the ascent to heaven of a fellow nun, and announcing the visions of other sisters.¹¹⁸

Even when he allots twenty-nine lines of description to Saint Æthelthryth, Bede raises questions about her perfection as he praises her.¹¹⁹ By contrasting her royal blood with the greater nobility of serving God, presenting her as an earthly queen inferior to the true royalty of heaven, noting that she reigned as an earthly queen for twelve years before entering a convent, and twice asking why this royal lady sought an earthly husband instead of her Lord as her groom, Bede emphasizes Æthelthryth's humanity as much as her holiness.¹²⁰ Through this descriptive method, he not only questions the wisdom of her two earthly marriages but also raises the possibility that these relationships forever mark Æthelthryth as imperfect despite her famed preservation of her virginity. His praise of her, "tu quoque sis mater regis ut aetherei [you also might be a mother of the King of Heaven]," stresses her exceptional status as a virginal wife while expressing anxiety about her difference from Mary.¹²¹ Although Bede praises Æthelthryth for winning new fame through her monastic life and proving her virginity by remaining incorrupt even sixteen years after her death, and he presents her as the bride forever singing to her true spouse, his emphasis on first her earthly marriages and then her saintly function as an avenger of Eve whom the Enemy "uicerat [conquered]" reminds readers that—despite this married woman's ascent to heaven—the best women are the ones who never participate in earthly marriage.¹²² Even in the final line of his hymn of praise, Bede feels the need to assert that Æthelthryth's "affectu [earthly love]" did not separate her from her true Bridegroom while once again underscoring her

problematic personal life.¹²³ Because his central theme is the development of the English church as an institution, abbesses—not female saints—receive detailed attention in *The Ecclesiastical History*.

Bede's abbesses provide models of obedience to the Benedictine Rule; successfully establish and lead monastic houses; and can witness, facilitate, or perform miracles.¹²⁴ However, in contrast to Bedan males, Bedan females have conditional access to holiness and often indirect access to miracles. Female holiness is conditional because it requires not only service to the institution of the English church but also perfect bodily integrity, integrity which enables holy women to become exceptions to the rule of female inferiority. Abbess Ælfflæd offers a model of this type of integrity: she not only lives “perpetua ei uirginitate consecrandam [devoted to God in perpetual virginity]” but also possesses a body guaranteed to be unviolated, for she entered the monastery at the age of barely one year as her father's gift of thanksgiving for a military victory.¹²⁵ When Bede notes that Ælfflæd dies a virgin at the age of about sixty, the integrity of her body becomes the sole basis for her claim to holiness.¹²⁶ Other abbesses offer extreme examples of such integrity through the incorruptibility of their corpses. Although Abbess Æthelburh receives praise for her life of virginity and austerity, it is her corpse that makes her virtue evident by remaining intact for seven years after her burial.¹²⁷ In a similar manner, Abbess Æthelthryth exemplifies bodily integrity, but she does so to the greatest possible degree. Because of her extraordinary devotion to virginity, which she preserves throughout two marriages, this abbess's corpse does not merely remain intact after death; instead, it becomes perfectly whole when a scar heals.¹²⁸ This miracle, a symbolic erasure of Æthelthryth's earthly life and the doubts it raises about her sanctity, signals that she has joined the ranks of virgins who were never married. Æthelthryth's corpse then heals the infirmities of penitents who touch her burial garments or coffin, so her perfected body eradicates bodily imperfection in others.¹²⁹

In contrast to Æthelthryth, other abbesses in Bede's history tend to have indirect access to miracles, as becomes evident through the cases of several of them who are mere facilitators of or witnesses to—rather than performers of—miracles. Seaxburh possesses all the attributes of an exemplary Bedan abbess: she is the leader of a monastic community as well as the daughter, wife, and mother of a king.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, what matters most about her to the historian is not her role as abbess of Ely but her indirect association with miraculous events: she is the mother of a daughter named Eorcengota whose virginal life is marked by “multa . . . opera uirtutum et signa miraculorum [many . . . works of holy power and signs of miracles],” although the only miracle he bothers to record is that of

the daughter's ascent to heaven.¹³¹ Abbess Hereburh's access to miracles is equally indirect, for she receives inclusion in Bede's narrative because she facilitates a male saint's performance of a miracle. By urging Bishop John of York to heal—through his blessing—the life-threatening illness of her daughter Cwenburh, Hereburh makes a miracle possible.¹³² In a similar case, Abbess Æthelhild (the sister of both an abbot and a bishop) first witnesses the sanctity of Saint Oswald when she sees the light that appears over his relics, and then facilitates the male saint's healing of a possessed man by supplying some soil that contains water from the washing of Oswald's bones.¹³³ In all of these cases, females witness or facilitate rather than perform miracles.

Just as Bede limits female access to holy objects and miraculous events, he limits female access to sacred learning. The case of Abbess Hild, who moves ever closer to God by living a life possessing messianic symmetry (she spends thirty-three years in secular habit and then thirty-three additional years leading a monastic life), reveals that sacred learning is the 'natural' domain of males.¹³⁴ Although Hild advises commoners as well as kings and princes, develops a large pool of priest-candidates by requiring the monks in her community to study scripture intensely and perform many good works, and leads a holy life that ends in miraculous visions that her sisters in Christ receive on the night of her death, she teaches the Benedictine Rule "prout a doctis uiris discere poterat [exactly as she had been able to acquire it from learned men]."¹³⁵ This phrasing presents learning as a male domain while underscoring that Hild may only transmit this sanctioned knowledge. Furthermore, the use of *poterat* 'she had been able' implies that Hild's capacity to learn marks her as an exceptional female. By saying that Hild's exemplary conduct and life story provide others with access to both repentance and salvation, Bede offers high praise to a member of the female sex.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Hild's learning both derives from and serves male ecclesiastics, and it is exceptional: *The Ecclesiastical History* makes no reference to a tradition of learning among female monastics. Abbess Ælfflæd founds a monastic community at Whitby and becomes a teacher of the Benedictine Rule within it, but she transmits the knowledge she gained as the "discipula [female pupil]" of (presumably) male teachers.¹³⁷ Through his abbesses, Bede demonstrates that even the greatest female monastics have less access to both God's deeds and his holy word than their male counterparts.

In Bede's history, queens tend to receive inclusion because their male relatives convert, and even then these women remain secondary and sometimes problematic spiritual role models. Mothers receiving brief mentions include Queen Cwenburh (the first wife of King Edwin) who

gives birth to two sons who later become Christians, and Queen Rícula of Essex (sister of King Æthelberht) who gives birth to the future King Sæberht—another convert.¹³⁸ The queens who receive more enthusiastic praise, however, either strengthen or help to establish their husbands' relationships with the Christian community. For example, Queen Bliththryth (wife of King Pippin of the Franks) successfully requests that Pippin give a home to Bishop Swithberht of Frisia and his followers, while Queen Æthelburh (second wife of King Edwin) is a model Christian wife: she gives birth to a daughter with little pain; receives a papal letter urging her to encourage her husband to convert; has her children baptized; and presides, with her husband, over a court within which the Christian fervor is so great that it keeps Bishop Paulinus of York catechizing and baptizing people for thirty-six days.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, because it is Paulinus rather than Æthelburh whom Bede credits with convincing King Edwin to convert to Christianity, this good woman has only secondary importance.¹⁴⁰ Receiving even less credit than Queen Æthelburh is Queen Alhflæd who has an indirect, and merely incidental, influence on her husband King Peada of the Middle Angles: her marriage to him. Her father will not allow her to marry Peada unless he converts, but Peada is ready to convert even if he cannot marry Alhflæd; moreover, it is the lady's brother who persuades Peada that Christianity is the true faith.¹⁴¹ Apparently, Bede's male figures favor advice from an appropriately masculine source.

Other female role models in *The Ecclesiastical History* are more important, yet they remain problematic because they are marked by sin. For example, Helena, mother of Constantine, performs an action of great significance for the Christian community—finding the cross on which Christ died—that makes her worthy of inclusion; however, she is not a wife but a concubine.¹⁴² An even more problematic queen is Osthryth of Mercia, who receives mention both because she facilitates an exorcism and because she marries her own brother.¹⁴³ She informs Abbess Æthelhild about the healing powers of the soil that has absorbed water used to wash Saint Oswald's bones, soil the abbess then uses to heal a man; nevertheless, Osthryth's sin of incest appears to catch up with her, for her third and final mention concerns her murder by her own people, the Mercian nobles.¹⁴⁴ Although Bede does not provide a reason for her murder in his recapitulatory list of events, Osthryth's death at the hands of her countrymen suggests that her sinful marriage determines her fate. Because this woman's brother/husband receives no punishment while she receives harsh punishment, readers are likely to conclude that women are inherently more sinful than men. Osthryth's story suggests what another portion of Bede's history discusses openly: the idea that women are men's spiritual inferiors.

Predictably, when Bede presents the female sex as a whole, his primary concern is to ensure that women do not interfere with the spiritual life of men. The forum in which he does so is the responses of Pope Gregory the Great to a series of questions from Bishop Augustine of Kent. Their discussion centers upon women's potential power to contaminate sacred spaces and impede their husbands' spiritual union with God. Although Gregory's responses encourage tolerance of women's contact with holy rituals and spaces, Bishop Augustine asks a set of related questions stemming from fear of the potentially contaminating female body: Should a priest baptize a pregnant woman? How long must a woman wait after childbirth before entering a church? How long after childbirth should a husband wait to have intercourse with his wife? And may a man who has had intercourse with his wife enter a church or receive communion before he has washed?¹⁴⁵ In the course of answering these questions, Pope Gregory states that travail in childbed is woman's punishment for the pleasure of conception, but a woman recently delivered of a child can be baptized because the priest should not lose an opportunity to save her soul; however, despite urging a figurative reading of the Old Testament, the pope repeats (using Christianized numbers) its teaching that a woman should be kept out of the house of God for twice as long if delivered of a girl rather than a boy.¹⁴⁶ By interpolating this material into his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede suggests to readers that female children pollute their mothers' bodies twice as much as male ones.

Women's supposed power to contaminate their husbands' bodies is likewise evident in Pope Gregory's prohibition against a man having intercourse with his wife during the woman's menstrual period, especially in his noting that the penalty in holy law for this crime is death.¹⁴⁷ The extreme nature of this penalty underscores a fear of contamination through contact with menstrual blood. This fear derived in part from Old Testament passages such as Leviticus 15:19–30, and in part from a combination of Jewish traditions surrounding female impurity and Roman taboos about contact with menstruating and postpartum women.¹⁴⁸ In addition, Bede records that having marital intercourse requires a man first to wash, and then to delay entering the church building so that he can clear his mind of the desire for the flesh that intercourse engenders in him.¹⁴⁹ In *The Ecclesiastical History*, good women are rare exceptions to the fundamentally corrupting influence of females—particularly of female bodies. If readers examine Geoffrey of Monmouth's inclusion and use of female figures, however, they discover that he departs from both the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography and the misogyny inherent in that tradition.

Reassessing Geoffrey of Monmouth's Female Figures

Although both specialist and nonspecialist readers of the Vulgate version of Geoffrey's history tend to focus on its Arthurian section, it is the non-Arthurian portion that best reveals how this account of the British past was preparing Norman readers for what, in 1138, was the anticipated reign of Empress Matilda as king of England: it uses "genealogical narrative in a new way" in order to create a line of early British kings that includes younger as well as older siblings, and daughters as well as sons.¹⁵⁰ Given the political complications that the Norman aristocracy faced with two claimants to the English throne (one the dead king's nephew and the other his designated, though female, heir), Geoffrey's creation of a female-inclusive genealogy of early Britain is a predictable response to his historical moment.¹⁵¹ Attention to this genealogy, however, requires reassessing generalizations such as those of Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke that "up until the reign of Vortigern and the arrival of the Saxons, then, Geoffrey's treatment of women is nothing if not conventional; most of the women conform to gender roles that serve the needs of a biopolitics of lineage" and that, after Arturus's birth, female figures are merely "either victims of male lust (Helena, the niece of King Hoel...) or gifts given in marriage (Gueenever)." ¹⁵² Such attention also requires recontextualizing Echard's conclusion that Geoffrey's history demonstrates both "the need for strong and legitimate central rule" and its author's "pessimistic [attitude] as to the likelihood of such rule existing and persisting" because, despite this overriding pessimism, Geoffrey's account of the British past offers a potential solution to the problems of male kings' immorality and incompetence: female rule.¹⁵³ This solution encourages Geoffrey's Norman readers to support Empress Matilda as the most qualified king-candidate.

More specifically, careful attention to how Geoffrey presents female figures in the non-Arthurian portion of his book reveals more than an absence of misogynistic statements about the supposed physical and moral weaknesses of women and their consequent inferiority to men; it reveals the presence of five narrative patterns that give Galfridian females mostly positive attributes.¹⁵⁴ One pattern is that Geoffrey includes only two female figures that commit morally reprehensible actions, and he does not condemn them. More importantly, Geoffrey chooses not to villainize womankind as deceitful or morally weak despite the opportunities afforded by the problematic actions of these female figures. Another pattern is that Geoffrey assigns to female figures roles besides those of wife, mother, nun, and virgin-martyr: the roles of warrior and king. Still another pattern is that, even when playing traditional gender roles, the

female figures Geoffrey creates occupy pivotal positions in his account of the British past and receive considerable sympathy through his narration of events. The most striking pattern, however, is that Geoffrey's account includes female kings who—when given the opportunity to rule—conduct themselves better than most of their male counterparts. This pattern makes Geoffrey a feminist for his time. Closely associated with this pattern is another one that reinforces his message about female kings: he presents male usurpation of the power of a female king as tragic, and the usurpation of the power of female king-candidates as problematic or disastrous. Because Geoffrey both inserts into the timeline he inherited from his historiographical predecessors female figures of his own creation and expands that timeline to accommodate these creations, his version of the early British past merits the label 'feminist.'

'Bad Girls' Who Are Not So Bad

Feminist critic Katherine Olson has asserted that medieval historiography groups queens into "two distinct categories": "those who diminish the threat of violence through peace weaving, regency, and motherhood and those who incite war and invasion by manipulating their feminine sexuality."¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Galfridian historiography does not villainize females who commit acts of violence and consistently presents the concept of female kingship as a desirable alternative to the moral failings of male kings. Given that Geoffrey includes fifty female characters in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, it is striking that among them are only two female figures that commit a morally reprehensible action: Iudon and Ronwein.¹⁵⁶ It is likewise striking that although both commit murder, neither figure receives the narrator's condemnation or inspires a comment about the supposed faults of womankind. Instead of judging the morality of their actions, Geoffrey focuses on the political roles these two figures play and the causes of their actions.

In a book that continually bemoans the evils of civil war, readers might expect that Iudon's killing her son Porrex—an act that leaves the throne unoccupied and thus creates the preconditions of civil war—would receive prompt and strong condemnation (33.298–304). Nevertheless, it receives neither condemnation nor branding as an action of pure vengeance despite the fact that, as French literature specialist Peggy McCracken has noted, "Revenge explains most examples of maternal murder in medieval literature."¹⁵⁷ In fact, Geoffrey's narration positions Porrex as a villain and Iudon as a loving mother who avenges the death of the son she loves most. Although Laura Barefield labels

Iudon as “a practically tragic figure” because she kills her murderous son in an altered mental state, careful attention to the character’s situation reveals it as tragic from the moment Porrex kills Ferreux.¹⁵⁸ When Porrex enters the story, Geoffrey labels him as both “maiori cupiditate subductus [pulled from below by greater covetousness]” and as a man who “paratis insidiis Ferreucem fratrem interficere parat [tried to kill his brother Ferreux by means of preparing an ambush]” (33.293–94). Porrex appears all the more brutal when, following his failed ambush attempt, he leads the army that kills Ferreux, along with all of Ferreux’s troops, in battle (33.294–97). Geoffrey is then careful to define Iudon’s murder of Porrex, which avenges the murder of Ferreux, as a crime of passion; in this way, the historian provides an explanation and potential excuse for it. The phrase “Vnde tanta ira ob mortem ipsius ignescebat [She was glowing with passion on account of great anger because of the death of him (Ferreux)]” mitigates the mother’s responsibility for her actions (33.300), as does the detail that the hatred that Porrex’s crime causes within her alienates Iudon from her natural self; moreover, the verb *uersa est* ‘she was transformed’ emphasizes that this transformation of a loving mother into a murderer is temporary (33.299).¹⁵⁹ In addition, Geoffrey includes in his narration the fact that “diligebat namque illum magis altero [for truly she loved him (Ferreux) more than the other (Porrex)]” (33.299–300), information that makes her action understandable, and perhaps just.

Geoffrey’s lack of comment when Iudon and her female servants tear Porrex’s body into pieces is noteworthy, especially given medieval historians’ penchant for moralizing when a female commits a crime (33.301–2). By not only refusing to condemn Iudon but also linking her son Porrex’s death with the idea of love, Geoffrey creates a narrative space different from the one that biblical and classical examples of murderous mothers normally inhabit in medieval texts. As McCracken observes regarding the Bible, a father (such as Abraham) can sacrifice a child, but “when a mother kills her child, the infanticide is always a murder”; as a result, medieval literature tends to demonize mothers who kill their children: “A mother’s murder of her children is usually narrated as an unnatural crime, a monstrous act that cannot be explained in terms of a ‘higher’ good.”¹⁶⁰ Alain de Lille produces such demonization when he retells the classical myth of Medea for a Christian audience in *De planctu Naturae*, presenting Medea’s murder of her children as unnatural and a violation of the role of mother.¹⁶¹ In contrast to Alain, Geoffrey does not demonize his female figure: he blames Iudon neither for the murder of her son nor for the civil war that follows, leading readers to conclude that this murder is emotionally justifiable although morally wrong.

The larger narrative context of Iudon's story likewise excuses her, for it is male aggression that creates the preconditions for both Iudon's murder of her son and the ensuing civil war. Before the murder, both Ferreux and Porrex demonstrate their ruthlessness. Porrex's attempt at ambushing his brother is the result of his feeling *maiori cupiditate*, a phrase with the literal meaning of 'greater desire for the wrong thing' (33.293). After Ferreux escapes the ambush, he reveals his cold-blooded ambition by invading his homeland with the help of a foreign king (King Suhardus of the Franks) in order to attack Porrex (33.294–96). Given that Geoffrey asserts throughout his history that colluding with foreigners to gain the throne creates political instability, Ferreux is clearly in the wrong (40.92–41.126). Furthermore, the aggression of Iudon's sons causes Ferreux's death, for Ferreux dies attacking his brother—apparently to avenge the attempt on his life. Although Iudon leads the group of avengers that kills Porrex in his sleep, the fact that she tears his body to pieces with the aid of female servants mitigates her responsibility (33.301–2). In addition, the communal dimension to Porrex's death prepares for the communal dimension to the social dissolution that follows it. Five kings struggle for power after Iudon's sons are dead: “*ciuilis discordia [civil war]*” continues because these men have “*sese mutuis cladibus infestabant [attacked each other with mutual massacre]*” (33.303–4). This plot sequence, therefore, involves seven male kings and king-candidates as well as an unidentified number of females in the destruction of Britain's political stability.

Crucially, by using accounts of the civil-war-torn reigns of King Leir and King Belinus to fill approximately half of the narrative space between Brutus's arrival in Britain and Julius Caesar's arrival there, Geoffrey makes the island's ongoing “dismemberment” the fault of many individuals and its root cause male aggression.¹⁶² In this respect, Geoffrey's version of early Britain is like Norman-controlled England, which saw “frequent armed conflict” between brothers, uncles, and nephews during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁶³ Galfridian Britain reflects the fact that royal succession among the Normans was a fraught and bloody business. When presenting the story of Ronwein, a pagan woman who becomes the wife of King Vortegirnus and eventually has her stepson King Vortimerius poisoned, Geoffrey treats her as he treats Iudon: he does not blame her for Britain's political instability.

In fact, readers' initial impression of Ronwein is likely to be neutral. Geoffrey introduces Ronwein as the daughter of Hengistus “*cuius pulcritudo nulli secunda uidebatur [whose beauty seemed second to none]*” (100.340). Helping her father to host King Vortegirnus in their home, Ronwein addresses Vortegirnus as “*lauerd king [lord king]*” and

offers him the greeting “wasseil” (100.347). Geoffrey’s calling her a “puella [girl]” positions her as an obedient daughter and the recipient of the king’s attentions: the young woman does nothing overt to tempt Vortegirinus (100.344). When Ronwein greets the king and drinks to his health, the narration attributes to her no ulterior motive. To the king, in contrast, it attributes the motive of lust: “At ille, uisa facie puellae, ammiratus est tantum eius decorem et incaluit [But he, seeing the face of the girl, was astonished by her great beauty/charm, and he began to glow with passion]” (100.348). Because the king desires Ronwein before he consumes the wine she offers him, his response to her *wasseil* makes him the aggressor in their interaction. Vortegirinus immediately acts on his passionate desire by complicating the simple ritual of replying “drincheil” and drinking Ronwein’s health: the king orders the girl to drink and then takes the goblet from her hand, kissing her before he drinks (100.351–54).

Geoffrey’s retelling of this story from *The History of the British* does not present Ronwein as a temptress; instead, it provides an explanation for a particular drinking custom in Britain.¹⁶⁴ It focuses on Vortegirinus’s inappropriate desire as a political liability while Ronwein receives no blame for the results of his lust. Vortegirinus, becoming what Echard calls the “king-as-buffoon” through his consumption of “diuerso genere potus [various types of intoxicating drink],” gets “inebriatus [drunk]” and “intrante Sathana in corde suo, amaui puellam et postulauit eam a patre suo [with Satan entering his heart, he loved the girl and demanded her from her father]” (100.357–58).¹⁶⁵ In a rare use of ‘I,’ Geoffrey intrudes into his narrative in order to underscore the immoral nature of the king’s desire: “Intrauerat, inquam, Sathanas in corde suo quia cum Christianus esset cum pagana coire desiderabat [I repeat that Satan entered his heart because, although he was a Christian, he longed to have sexual intercourse with a pagan woman]” (100.358–60). What is absent here, however, is a comment about the innate deceitfulness and danger of (pagan) women.

Once King Vortegirinus puts himself in a weak political position, Ronwein’s father Hengistus takes full advantage of the situation; consequently, he becomes the story’s villain. A man whom Geoffrey describes as “doctus atque astutus [expert and sly]” (99.301–2), Hengistus demands the province of Kent in exchange for his daughter because “erat prudens, comperta leuitate animi regis [he was wise, ascertaining the king’s inconstancy of spirit]” (100.360). Geoffrey’s phrasing of the exchange of Ronwein for land reveals that the young woman has no choice in the matter as well as that the king’s lust for her, and her father’s lust for land, are so strong that the two men—in their haste to satisfy their own

desires—do not bother to consult the ruler of Kent: “Nec mora, data fuit puella Vortegirno et prouincia Cantiae Hengisto, nesciente Gorangono comite, qui in eadem regnabat [Without delay, the girl was given to Vortegirnus, and the province of Kent given to Hengistus—without the knowledge of Earl Gorangonus who reigned over it]” (100.363–65). Geoffrey then completes the portrait of the king’s lust using two details: the marriage ceremony takes place “eadem nocte [that same night]” and Ronwein “ultra modum placuit ei [pleased him beyond measure]” (100.365–66). After the ceremony, Hengistus continues to exploit the king’s moral weakness for his own gain; as a result, Vortegirnus assents when his father-in-law offers him advice and subsequently allows the Saxons to invite their comrades to Britain so that he will have protection from local enemies. Even when the Britons object to being overrun by Saxon mercenaries, Vortegirnus “super omnes gentes propter coniugem suam ipsos diligebat [loved them (the Saxons) above all other peoples on account of his wife]” (101.397–98). The king’s abandonment of British interests eventually leads to both civil war and Hengistus’s murder of 460 British noblemen (101.398–412, 104.459–76). In short, Geoffrey holds Ronwein’s foolish husband Vortegirnus and her deceitful father Hengistus—not Ronwein—responsible for the deterioration in British sovereignty. Nevertheless, despite her role as the obedient daughter before she becomes queen of Britain, Ronwein becomes problematic after she becomes queen.

Even when Ronwein becomes a murderer, however, Geoffrey stops short of condemning her. During the civil war between King Vortegirnus and his son Vortimerius, Vortimerius is doing exactly what a good king should do—returning possessions to their rightful British owners and restoring the churches—when Ronwein intervenes. What she chooses to do is both deceitful and immoral: she learns as much as she can about “ueneficiis [poisons / magic potions]” and then bribes one of Vortimerius’s servants to poison him (102.416–18). Nevertheless, Geoffrey explains rather than condemns her action. Instead of branding Ronwein as naturally evil because of her paganism, he says that “Diabolus [the Devil]” entered Ronwein’s heart and “inuidit [made her envious]” of her stepson’s good acts (102.415–16). If readers recall the actions of King Vortegirnus, Ronwein’s situation differs from his. First, whereas Vortegirnus desired her before he got drunk and Satan encouraged that desire, Ronwein lacks murderous intent until the Devil takes control of her. Second, whereas Vortegirnus cared more about satisfying his lust than about his people, even after their attempts to remind him of his duty toward them, Ronwein’s poisoning of Vortimerius involves mitigating factors: through this action, she protects her husband by eliminating

his rival as well as demonstrates loyalty to her father. After Vortegirinus returns to the throne, Ronwein puts loyalty to her father above all else: she successfully requests that her husband invite her father to return to Britain, and she sends word to her father of a British plot to repel the Saxon forces (103.433–37, 103.441–43). Although Geoffrey could brand Ronwein as disloyal to her husband and unfaithful in fulfilling her duties as queen of Britain, he chooses instead to brand Hengistus as the inciter of 460 murders “*noua proditione usus* [through the use of singular treachery]”: the Saxon leader orders each of his soldiers to conceal a long dagger in his boot and then cut the throat of the man next to him (104.459–64). Ronwein is a pagan, a traitor to the Britons, and a murderer, but Geoffrey resists branding her either as another Eve or as a woman who chooses to do evil. As will become evident in the chapters that follow, Geoffrey’s redactors and early translators seldom miss an opportunity to condemn womankind.

Geoffrey’s choice not to condemn outright Cordeilla’s sisters Regau and Gonorilla offers another striking example of his resistance to villainizing womankind. Regau and Gonorilla are dishonest and unkind, for they flatter their father King Leir in order to get their inheritance, fail to honor their father when sharing power with him, and strip him of dignity by reducing his retinue until it consists of a single man. Geoffrey’s calling Leir “*credulus* [gullible]” when he believes Regau’s claim that she loves him more than all other creatures (31.150–51), combined with his narratorial comment that Regau is “*exemplo sororis suae beniuolentiam patris allicere uolens* [wishing to lure the favor of her father by following the example of her sister]” (31.149–50), underscores the daughters’ dishonesty. When Leir becomes too old and weak to defend his rights, the daughters do not deter their husbands from rebelling and stripping the king of his “*regnum regiamque potestatem* [kingdom and royal power]” (31.188). Then Gonorilla tells Leir that he should reduce his retinue from forty to thirty knights, Regau tells him to reduce it to five, and finally Gonorilla insists that he dismiss all but one man (31.189–207). Strikingly, however, the narration does not define the two sisters as co-conspirators; instead, it brands their husbands as rebels: “*Insurrexerunt in illum praedicti duces quibus Britanniam cum filiabus diuiserat* [They rose up against him, the aforementioned dukes between whom he had divided Britain and to whom he had given his daughters]” (31.186–87). Geoffrey later repeats the fact that it is the sons-in-law who rebel, for Leir “*pugnauit . . . cum generis et triumpho potitus est* [fought . . . with his sons-in-law and achieved victory]” (31.253–54).

More importantly, according to Geoffrey’s account, the daughters’ reduction of their father’s retinue has a more than reasonable cause: the

disruption that Leir and his men cause in first Gonorilla's and then Regau's household. Gonorilla becomes "*indignata est* [resentful/angry]," for Leir's knights "*conuicia ministris inferebant quia sibi profusior epimonia non praebebatur* [inflicted insults/abuse on her servants because the monthly rations supplied to them were not more plentiful]" (31.192–93). Therefore, her recommendation that Leir reduce his retinue has clear and rational motives: the maintenance of order in her household and the containment of its expenses. In the case of Regau, Geoffrey does not repeat the description of the knights' disruptive behavior, but he implies that she soon faces the same problem as her sister. His narration states both that "*non praeteriit annus quin inter utrorumque familias discordia orta fuerat* [without a year passing by, discord had emerged between the two households]" (31.197–98) and that Regau "*in indignationem uersa praecepit patri cunctos socios deserere praeter quinque qui ei obsequium praestarent* [having become angry, informed her father to dismiss all of his companions except for five who would supply him with services]" (31.198–200). Consequently, Regau's desire to reduce Leir's retinue to five men is a logical response to the inappropriate behavior of its members. Even Gonorilla's final decision to dismiss all the men but one is made within the context of the recent offense against her household: "*At illa nequaquam a coepta indignatione reuersa est* [But her anger had by no means begun to lessen]" (31.202–3). As a result, Gonorilla is highly motivated to solve this ongoing problem.

Geoffrey, as narrator, neither condemns these potentially blameworthy daughters nor uses this story of family strife as a platform for criticizing women, either for moral weakness or for possessing the stereotypically feminine gift for verbal manipulation. On the contrary, although the actions of Gonorilla and Regau suggest that they love property rather than their father's person, they function as good household managers and loyal partners of their respective husbands. Their successful takeover of Britain from their old and foolish father could even have reminded Geoffrey's readers of recent history: King Henry I had refused to allow Empress Matilda and her second husband to take control of the property he had given them, leaving his daughter unable to obtain the throne immediately upon her father's death. In short, Geoffrey's Norman readers could have drawn two lessons from the first part of the Leir story: first, that a king who empowers his sons-in-law more than his daughters risks overthrow; and second, that this king's daughters keep their households in better order than their foolish father keeps his. Geoffrey of Monmouth presents another potentially 'bad girl' in a neutral manner when he describes the problematic case of a nun who has conceived a child by an incubus.

As readers might expect given his secular approach to historiography, Geoffrey includes only one nun in the non-Arthurian portion of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, the nameless figure of Merlinus's mother, and this nun has lost her virginity under problematic circumstances. She is a figure that Tolstoy has interpreted as a mischievous joke, perhaps inspired by "some contemporary scandal."¹⁶⁶ Because Geoffrey's contemporary Bledri ap Cydifor had close connections with the church of Carmarthen, Tolstoy assumes that Geoffrey's "intent was mischievous" when he located this nun's sexual encounter in that particular church; he also asserts that Geoffrey presents the encounter "with humour," thereby providing "titillating pleasure" for both the author and his readers.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, even if her story has the humorous dimension of an inside joke, Merlinus's mother typifies Geoffrey's treatment of female figures in that she plays a key role (explaining the origin of the magician who will bring about Arturus's begetting) and receives respectful treatment, despite her morally questionable actions.

Merlinus's mother enters Geoffrey's narrative at a point of high emotional intensity, the one at which her young son must talk his way out of supplying the blood of "iuuenem sine patre [a youth without a father]" that, according to the king's magicians, will make the foundations of Vortegirnus's tower structurally sound (106.507). Although King Vortegirnus commands that Merlinus and his mother appear before him, once this woman arrives at court, both she and her improbable story receive validation. The king receives "diligenter matrem [the mother respectfully]" because he is aware that she is "nobilibus natalibus [descended from nobles]" (107.528–29). The story she tells the king, however, raises questions about her morality. Declaring, "neminem agnoui [I have known no man]" in the begetting of Merlinus, she describes how someone visited her in the convent's private apartments, took the form of a handsome youth, kissed her, and made love to her when invisible (107.531–32, 107.9–16). Sensing the awkwardness of her situation, Merlinus's mother carefully submits to the king while asserting the fact of her sexual innocence, despite her loss of virginity: "Sciat prudentia tua, domine mi, quod aliter uirum non agnoui qui iuuenem istum genuerit [Your knowledge, my lord, must determine who begat this boy, for I have known no other man]" (107.539–40).

Ignoring the opportunities for moralizing that this situation offers to him as a narrator, Geoffrey condemns Merlinus's mother neither for foolishness nor for questionable conduct; instead, her tale gains authority for two reasons. One is that King Vortegirnus does not presume to judge this woman, deferring to the wisdom of Maugantius—a man who happens to be an expert on incubus demons (107.541–42). The other is

that Maugantius, after hearing her story, states that philosophy books as well as many histories record conceptions through incubus demons, conceptions like that of Merlinus (107.544–47). By citing authoritative texts, Maugantius validates the nun's claims. He suggests, "Forsitan unus ex eis huic mulieri apparuit et iuuenem istum in ipsa generauit [Perhaps one of these (incubi) appeared to this woman and begat this boy within her]" (107.549–50). Once his mother receives this public validation, Merlinus emulates her by speaking to the king in a dignified, calm way; he then reveals his knowledge of both the cause of the tower's instability and the future of Britain (108.551–77). Geoffrey's choice of having the mother's words prepare for the prophecies of her son reveals both a willingness to give female figures pivotal roles in his version of British history and a tendency to present female figures as worthy of men's respect, even when their actions violate the norms of Christian behavior.

Heroines into Heroes

Geoffrey of Monmouth, like other medieval historians, weaves into his narrative of the British past episodes in which men victimize women. However, unlike his colleagues, he positions these episodes at crucial points in his narrative and presents female victims of male violence as offering principled, even heroic, responses to misfortune. I have previously argued that the Arthurian section of *The History of the Kings of Britain* offers two models of female heroism: Helena, the maiden who is willing to die rather than submit to sexual violation by the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel; and her nursemaid who is willing to sacrifice herself for another when she has no hope of personal gain and assumes a traditionally male role by choosing to protect Beduerus's "florem iuuentutis [flower of youth]," as a knight would protect a maiden's virginity (165.57).¹⁶⁸ The non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey's history offers additional examples of female heroism that merit study because they demonstrate how Fries's categories of heroine and female hero can overlap. Fries defines Arthurian heroines as "conservative, passive, instrumental non-actors, useful for provoking, renewing and rewarding the actions of their knight-agents" and female heroes as characters that "may, indirectly and for a specified time, consciously play female parts to effect transformation of their male-dominant world, but . . . always act only for knightly benefit."¹⁶⁹ Brianus's sister, however, fits neither of these categories neatly.

In fact, Brianus's sister combines aspects of heroineism with those of heroism, understood in both Fries's and the traditional sense. She is

heroine-like because she is a kidnap victim who awaits rescue and lacks a name except in relation to her brother, the male relative whom readers might expect to rescue her. Nevertheless, she fits Fries's definition of the female hero because her actions benefit her brother Brianus in his knightly role of serving King Caduallo. Within Geoffrey's narrative of early Britain, the assistance that Brianus's sister provides changes political conditions in her "male-dominant world": she facilitates the triumph of King Caduallo, Brianus's uncle, over King Edwinus of Northumbria by enabling Brianus to complete his mission of killing Edwinus's magician. Like the damsels who facilitate male success in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, Brianus's sister facilitates male success—in her case that of both the king and her brother.¹⁷⁰ King Caduallo knows that he cannot win his war against Edwinus while the magician Pellitus lives, for Pellitus has been giving Edwinus the strategic advantage of foreknowledge of his enemy's location (193.297–99). However, Pellitus becomes vulnerable to attack through the aid of a victim of Edwinus's ravaging of British territory: Brianus's sister.

Despite being in a heroine's situation as King Edwinus's captive and behaving in a heroine-like manner when she experiences overwhelming emotions in response to seeing her brother, this young woman restrains herself from greeting her sibling with affection—thus preserving his safety by keeping their relationship secret—and performs her female-hero function by supplying him with crucial information (196.394–98). Pretending that he is no one in particular, Brianus's sister chats with him, sharing both the "statum curiae [the circumstances at court]" (presumably how to locate his target) and the identity of that target (196.398–401). This female figure also acquires some of the characteristics of a male hero when Geoffrey contrasts the siblings' behavior. Whereas Brianus "in fletum solutus [dissolve(s) into tears]" after recognizing his sister, she (despite nearly fainting out of fear that her brother will be captured) manages to focus on her task of imparting crucial information (196.395–98). In this manner, Geoffrey attributes greater emotional strength to Brianus's sister than to Brianus himself. More striking, however, is the historian's decision to have this maiden attempt to escape unaided from her kidnapper and captor Edwinus, thereby rejecting her role as a heroine who must, by definition, wait for either her brother or another male to rescue her. Although unsuccessful in her escape attempts because Edwinus blocks every gate following the magician's murder, the detail that she tries to escape "pluribus modis [through several methods]" indicates a strong desire to become her own rescuer and perform the function of a hero (196.407–11). Because she attempts to become a hero in the traditional, male sense of taking action for her

own benefit, Brianus's sister blurs the boundary between the categories of male hero and female hero.

Although the story of Brianus's sister ends with her attempts to escape captivity, her interaction with her brother changes the course of British history. She makes it possible for her brother to complete his mission and then continue to serve his king, a king who soon afterwards defeats first King Peanda of Mercia and then King Edwinus of Northumbria (197.419–32). Inspired by loyalty to the British people and love of her brother, Brianus's sister brings about Brianus's successful assassination of Merlinus's "alter ego," which in turn enables King Caduallo to gain full possession of the British throne (196.405–7, 197.430–32).¹⁷¹ The most important result of her actions—the preservation of British sovereignty—changes the course of history. She enables Caduallo to become the last great king of early Britain, one whom Geoffrey praises as both "nobilissimus [noblest]" and "potentissimus [most powerful]" because he reigns over a united Britain (201.504–5). Brianus's sister is, therefore, a pivotal character that invites readers to question Fries's assertion that it was not until the late twelfth century that Chrétien de Troyes created the first character in an Arthurian text worthy of the label female hero.¹⁷² Furthermore, if readers accept Geraldine Heng's suggestion that the name Brianus is Geoffrey's means of honoring Empress Matilda's "indispensable supporter" Brian Fitz Count, then this story functions as a political allegory in which Matilda and Brian Fitz Count overcome evil and ensure the continuation of legitimate rule.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, whether or not readers assign a twelfth-century meaning to her story, Brianus's sister encourages readers to admit flexibility into Fries's scheme of three distinct categories for female characters in the Arthurian tradition.

The example of Dionotus's daughter (in some manuscripts of Geoffrey's history named Vrsula) and her companions is like that of Brianus's sister in that it supplies evidence of how the roles of heroine and female hero overlap in Geoffrey's history, but it does so through a different plot dynamic. Whereas Brianus's sister achieves a "transformation of [her] male-dominant world" but does not "play female parts" in a self-conscious manner, these females cannot transform the world they inhabit and serve men's dynastic interests; nevertheless, through expressing their opinions about female roles and resisting sexual violence, they enable Geoffrey as narrator to critique male domination.¹⁷⁴ By secularizing the legend of Saint Ursula and her virgin companions, Geoffrey creates a group of female characters whose members offer principled and brave responses to their use and abuse by men. This secularization transforms generic virgin-martyrs into devotees of both their

homeland and their God who appear at a pivotal moment in the history of the Britons. This moment occurs soon after Maximianus (son-in-law of King Octavius) and Conanus Meridiadocus (nephew of King Octavius) have taken Brittany from the Franks, and Maximianus has given Brittany to Conanus as his kingdom. At this juncture, Conanus has a major problem to solve: to provide wives for the British men over whom he rules and thereby avoid their intermarrying with French women (87.365–66). Without “filias [daughters]” (88.374) to serve their people in this way, the Britons living in this second Britain will lose their ethnic identity as well as their colonial powerbase; therefore, compliant young women are essential if this conquest is to become successful colonization. The female characters Geoffrey introduces into this plot are, however, decidedly not chattel: they are not heroines who passively accept their fate.

On the contrary, in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s version of the Ursula legend, the young women wish to make life choices based on their personal moral principles: loyalty to God and to the British nation, with patriotism finally outweighing religious devotion. In addition, what would otherwise be a straightforward virgin-martyr story gains complexity when the women disagree. Although loyalty to country inspires many of the young women to be willing to marry their compatriots in Brittany in order to prevent the dilution of their people’s bloodline, more of them object to going to Brittany because they love their homeland and parents so intensely (88.377–79). Therefore, loyalty to homeland is the primary motive of all of them, despite its producing contrary attitudes toward the prospect of marriage. Adding another element of complexity to the story, some of the young women might simply prefer chastity to marriage and would rather die than marry for wealth (88.379–82). This subgroup is motivated by the Christian values that traditional *vitae* of martyr-saints reinforce. Geoffrey’s choice of distinguishing among subgroups based on personal attitudes and desires is significant, for it individuates these female figures and demonstrates that they all want to choose their own life paths.

As strong as this common desire is, it cannot alter the harsh reality that all of the young women must go to Brittany. Conanus, the ruler of Brittany, has “direxit [directed/ordered]” that Dionotus, the king of Cornwall, send British women as brides for their countrymen, and Dionotus has “praecepit [ordered]” all of the young women to assemble in London as well as “iussit [commanded]” that ships be prepared to deliver the women to their husbands (87.366–77). In fact, Geoffrey’s narration focuses on their lack of choice as women, thereby increasing the poignancy of the virgins’ deaths: “Quippe diuersas diuersa iuuarent si

quod adoptabant ad effectum ducere quiuissent [Certainly, various things would have pleased various women, if only they had been able to perform what they had chosen for themselves]" (88.381–82). The position of this comment immediately before the shipwreck and massacre that end the women's lives enables Geoffrey both to suggest that the young women should have been free to choose whatever life they wanted and to emphasize the crimes that men commit against them. Just before Vrsula and her companions reach Brittany, a violent storm scatters the fleet with two results: some of the women drown, and the rest suffer at the hands of the leaders of the Picts and Huns (88.383–89).

By having these female characters suffer shipwreck and then find themselves at the mercy of non-Christian enemies immediately after he bemoans the maidens' lack of choice (88.381–82), Geoffrey demonstrates how men cause women to suffer; nevertheless, he enables some of these female characters to die heroically. The story's plot makes it clear that Vrsula and her companions suffer because of men's decisions. First the young women are forced to depart from their homeland—despite the principled objections that the majority of them have to doing so. Then they suffer shipwreck as a result of leaving Britain. Given that during the Middle Ages people tended to interpret natural disasters as evidence of God's hand shaping events on earth, Geoffrey's readers could have interpreted this storm either as a sign of God's displeasure with Conanus and Dionotus's lack of respect for the desires of these young women, or as God's saving some of these women from marriages they find abhorrent. Alternatively, readers could have interpreted the storm as an embodiment of the violence of the world these young women inhabit.

Regardless of how readers interpret the storm, however, Geoffrey's narration encourages sympathy for the young women by contrasting their principled behavior with the dissolute violence of "nefandum exercitum Wanii et Melgae [the abominable army of Wanius and Melga]" (88.388). Despite what they have already endured at sea and the physical threat that the warriors pose to them, the young women refuse to have intercourse with their captors—a principled and brave moral stance to take. They are not passive heroines in this situation, but rather female heroes who resist violation out of a desire to preserve the purity of their people's bloodline and/or their own virginity. In addition, their dissimilar desires and liminal status (they are nearly wives) put them on the borderline of Fries's subclasses of female hero: wife-hero and virgin-hero.¹⁷⁵ Technically, those among them who believe in defending the Briton bloodline die for the cause of Conanus and their other countrymen as wife-heroes, and those who believe in preserving their chastity die as virgin-heroes. Because most of the women are slaughtered immediately

upon their refusal, they die as both Christian and political martyrs (88.393–95). They are Christian martyrs because none of these women converts to paganism in order to save her life, and they are political martyrs because they would rather die than suffer violation by the inhabitants of “*barbaras insulas* [savage islands]” and, as a result, fail to achieve their goal of preserving the purity of the Briton bloodline (88.387). The verbs that Geoffrey uses encapsulate the difference between the women and their attackers: although the women “*abnegauissent* [refused to permit]” the barbarian soldiers “*lasciuire* [to indulge their lust],” the men “*irruerunt...maximamque partem sine mora trucidauerunt* [made an attack upon...and, without delay, butchered most of them]” (88.393–95). By creating a story in which noble female figures are not allowed to choose their roles and die despite doing what male leaders commanded them to do, Geoffrey creates great sympathy for the females and critiques male dominance through creating that sympathy.

These young women die as female heroes of an unusual sort because they display characteristics of both subtypes. Like Enide, Fries’s example of the wife-hero, they display “a loyal and loving *disobedience*” of their fathers, and, like the virgin-hero Lunete, they resist male aggression as women not yet “tamed by marriage.”¹⁷⁶ Geoffrey’s twelfth-century rape story, therefore, differs fundamentally from early modern rape fiction that presents rape as “‘natural’ and inevitable” and thereby naturalizes male domination and female subordination; in fact, the story allies itself with those rare medieval texts that resist “the Christian theological tendency to locate the cause of sexual transgression in the female.”¹⁷⁷ In no way does Geoffrey undermine the status of these heroic virgins.

Reinforcing the critique of male dominance that this story’s plot and manner of narration develop is the terminology Geoffrey uses to label these young women, terminology which changes with their situation. Although Flint notes that the young women are not labeled *virgines*, ‘virgins/maidens,’ the fact that Geoffrey secularizes a saint’s legend makes this word an unlikely choice for him.¹⁷⁸ More interesting, however, is how Geoffrey applies three different terms to this group of females. As Dionotus gathers the daughters of 11,000 noblemen and 6,000 commoners (with Geoffrey seemingly outdoing the original story’s 11,000 virgins through this headcount), it is natural that the narration should label them all as “*filias* [daughters]” (88.374). Nevertheless, immediately after these daughters voice their objections either to marriage itself or to marriage in exchange for money (implicitly critiquing the exchange of women to enhance their fathers’ wealth), Geoffrey refers to them as “*mulieres* [women]” (88.382). Their noble principles seem to earn them the status of adult women. Then, when these women become murder victims, they

receive the label “puellis [girls / female children / maidens]” (88.392). If readers construe the word *puellis* as ‘girls,’ it signifies the females’ helplessness in the face of male violence, and if as ‘female children,’ it reminds readers that the young women die because of their fathers’ decision to send them abroad to marry.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, if readers construe the word as ‘maidens,’ then Geoffrey’s version does label them as virgins, virgins who choose to die rather than have sex with evil, alien men. The variety of terms that the historian applies to Vrsula and her companions signals that they combine the traits of heroines and female heroes.

Queen Consorts as Heroic Peaceweavers

The two queen consorts who perform peacemaking functions in Geoffrey’s *History of the Kings of Britain* are typical of his treatment of female figures in that they not only receive narrative sympathy but also—even when playing traditional gender roles—significantly affect the course of history through their actions. The Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* offers the best-known example of the peaceweaver in English literature: King Hrothgar’s wife Wealhtheow. Through her speeches and ritualized distribution of drink, she encourages Beowulf and his men to aid her husband Hrothgar as well as tries to ensure that her sons will receive support and protection.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Wealhtheow’s impact on her male audience remains uncertain, for Beowulf states that he had already decided to aid Hrothgar when he left his homeland, while her words to her nephew and to Beowulf have no discernible effect.¹⁸¹ In addition, her actions are confined to the mead-hall where her roles as hostess and mother of princes make her the poem’s feminine ideal. In contrast to Wealhtheow, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s peaceweavers Gewissa and Tonwenna not only have a strong emotional impact on their male relatives through their roles as heroines but also, as female heroes, take action within the public, political, and usually male-only world of the battlefield in order to achieve political solutions to the disputes that men have chosen to resolve through warfare. Through their dual roles, both Gewissa and Tonwenna affect the course of early British history.

Through her role as a heroine, Gewissa has such a powerful emotional impact on her husband that she inspires a historically significant event and thus gains a prominent position in Galfridian history. This daughter of Emperor Claudius earns the “ammirationem [admiration]” of all who see her because “tanta pulcritudo [her beauty was so great]” (68.329–30), but Gewissa inspires such great passion in her husband Arviragus that he suggests to her father that they build the city of Gloucester to preserve “memoriam tantarum nuptiarum [the record

of such a great marriage]" (68.333). The strength of feeling this queen inspires in her husband is evident in Geoffrey's phrasing: "*Tanto feruore amoris succendit regem ita ut ipsam solam cunctis rebus praeferret* [She inflamed the king with such a great passionate desire that he preferred her alone to all things]" (68.330–31). Although an ecclesiastical historian might have faulted the king's passionate love and his queen's inspiration of it, Geoffrey presents this relationship positively. In Fries's terms, the queen as heroine inspires the noble act of city-building. Furthermore, by presenting Gewissa as the inspiration for the building of Gloucester and declaring that "*usque in hodiernum diem in confinio Kambriae et Loegriae super ripam Sabrinae sita est* [all the way down to the present day, it has been located on the bank of the Severn between Wales and Loegria]" (68.335–36), Geoffrey underscores the continuity between the early British landscape and the English landscape of his time while highlighting the city most directly connected with his primary dedicatee, Robert of Gloucester.

More importantly, however, this historical continuity works with the city's name to give historical significance to Gewissa herself. By articulating alternate etymologies for the city's name and then setting aside the possibility that it was named for Gloius, the son of Claudius who was begotten there (68.337–39), Geoffrey favors the female over the male as well as Gewissa in particular. In fact, both the brief mention of the Gloius etymology and the phrasing "*quidam uero dicunt* [however, some say]" make the alternate account seem less authoritative to readers than the Gewissa one (68.337). Moreover, Geoffrey's final words about the city follow from his account of Gloucester's founding in honor of Gewissa, whose marriage confirmed peace between her father and the king of Britain: "*Aedificata igitur urbe ac pacificata insula, rediit Claudius Romam regimenque prouincialium insularum Aruirago permisit* [Then, with the city having been built and the island made peaceful, Claudius returned to Rome, and he committed to Arviragus the rule of the islands of the province]" (68.339–40). As Geoffrey completes his description of Arviragus's reign, he once again confirms that Claudius and Arviragus built Gloucester (presumably in honor of the king's marriage to Gewissa) by stating that Arviragus is buried in the temple he earlier dedicated to Emperor Claudius (69.369–71).

Geoffrey's positioning a synchronism (a link between events in Britain with ones in other lands) at the turning point of Gewissa's story reinforces her historical significance. By linking the founding of Gloucester in Gewissa's name to the apostle Peter's founding the church at Antioch and sending Mark to Egypt to preach the gospel, this synchronism confers greater historicity on Gewissa's story than on Gloius's (68.340–43).

Given that Geoffrey concentrates ten such synchronisms in the early part of his history (the part in which he departs most radically from his sources), this synchronism's likely purpose is to encourage readers to accept the Gewissa account of Gloucester's founding over the competing one.¹⁸² In addition, because this synchronism appears in the middle of Gewissa's story, it provides a transition between her two roles: heroine and female hero.

Gewissa functions as a female hero who changes the course of British history through two actions: she brokers a peace between Vespasian (the commander her father Emperor Claudius sends to reassert Roman rule over Britain) and her tyrannical husband King Arviragus; and she transforms her "male-dominant world" by causing her husband to reform, thereby serving the interests of not only her husband but also his subjects. The context of Gewissa's intervention makes it politically as well as historically significant: politically significant because of the power struggle it involves, and historically significant because her action ensures that Britain does not become entirely subject to Rome in this plot sequence. Geoffrey portrays Arviragus as a king who rules wisely for a time, rebuilding the cathedral cities and castles (as a good Norman king would) (69.345), but who rules the people so strictly that "*longe positis regibus timori esset* [far-distant kings were afraid of him]" (69.346). Having realized how much power he wields, Arviragus becomes a tyrant in need of correction: "*Hinc autem subsequente superbia despexit Romanam potestatem nec senatui subiectionem uoluit tenere diutius sed sibimet omnia uendicauit* [However, because of his ensuing arrogance, he despised Roman sovereignty and did not consent to obedience to the senate but instead appropriated all things to himself to hold]" (69.346–48). His foolishness becomes all the more evident if readers note Geoffrey's earlier comment that submission to Rome is not "*dedecori* [shameful]" because the Romans "*totius orbis imperio potirentur* [possessed control over the entire world]" (67.324). The first form of correction is Rome's military invasion (69.348–55), but the second form is the intervention of Arviragus's wife.

Gewissa responds to a blatant example of men failing to resolve their differences by playing an active and public peaceweaving role. After Vespasian besieges Exeter for a week and then her husband Arviragus attacks the Romans, Gewissa brings peace by doing more than marry a man of her father's choice or speak as a hostess to her guests: she takes action to protect both her people by birth (the Romans) and her people by marriage (the Britons). Responding to the fact that "*die illa ualde laceratus fuit utrorumque exercitus, sed neuter potitus est uictoria* [on that day the army of both sides was badly mangled, but neither side was

able to attain victory]" (69.357–58), Gewissa intervenes at the battle site: "Mane autem facto, mediante Gewissa regina concordēs effecti sunt duces [However, in the early morning, Queen Gewissa reconciled the leaders through mediation]" (69.358–59).

Gewissa's intervention changes the course of British history in four ways. First, by ending the Roman–Briton war, she prevents the potential loss of the limited sovereignty her husband enjoys. Second, she brings a period of peace that lasts into Arviragus's old age—a significant result in a book whose overriding message is that civil war is the greatest (and all too common) political curse, and peace is the greatest blessing. Third, she improves the lives of all Britons by bringing the long-lasting peace that enables her husband to develop into an outstanding king: Arviragus begins to show the Roman senate appropriate respect, rules "cum pace et tranquillitate [in peace and tranquility]," and even earns fame throughout Europe for his geniality and generosity as well as for his ferocity in war (69.361–69). As a result of Queen Gewissa's intervention, King Arviragus the tyrant becomes a model king with a reputation so outstanding that the Romans both respect and fear him (69.364–65). Finally, by preventing her husband's death in battle, Gewissa ensures that the family line can continue through their son Marius who emulates his father in ruling with "iusticiam et pacem, leges et omnia honesta [justice and peace, laws and all honor]" (70.372–91). Perhaps this queen has taught her son how to behave like a true king, just as she taught his father. Although Gewissa's power is limited to that of a queen consort, her role as a mediator allows her to enter the normally masculine space of the battlefield and achieve lasting results. She is, however, not unique among Galfridian females in encouraging both the male characters around her and the readers that encounter her story to interpret events in *The History of the Kings of Britain* "like a woman."¹⁸³ Another female figure that encourages reading like a woman is Tonwenna: she is the other queen consort who mediates a peace settlement that ensures the survival of the royal line.

Tonwenna, like Gewissa, intervenes on the battlefield as a peacemaker; nevertheless, her action gains authority through the example of her husband, King Dunuallo Molmutius. Geoffrey prepares for Tonwenna's intervention that restores law and order to Britain by characterizing her husband as a ruler who brings peace through good laws. Dunuallo Molmutius decrees that anyone taking refuge in a temple shall receive pardon from his accuser, no outlaw may draw a sword on a traveler, and no one may appropriate a peasant's plough (34.327–35). After spending forty years protecting peace within his realm, this king is buried next to the Temple of Concord—a monument built at his command to symbolize the rule of law (34.335–37). The sons of this king of peace, however,

become involved in the “maxima...discordia [greatest...strife]” after their father’s death, and their conflict eases only through the intervention of the princes’ friends and only temporarily (35.2–4). The tension at the moment of the queen’s intervention is particularly high because Geoffrey includes in this story a dramatic description of the results of her sons’ second battle in which “concidebant inter corruentes cohortes uulnerati quemadmodum segetes cum a falcatoribus aggrediuntur [the wounded were cut to pieces among the clashing cohorts, as if they were corn stalks attacked by reapers armed with scythes]” (37.57–58). Consequently, when Tonwenna takes action to prevent her sons from killing each other in battle, she is performing the role of a female hero who continues the good work of her deceased husband. Like Gewissa, this queen consort courageously steps between the “cohortes [armies]” (41.126)—making her entrance dramatic and marking her as a female who enters the most masculine of spaces, the battlefield.

What makes Tonwenna’s intervention memorable, however, is that she fulfills her function as a female hero by staging a performance of the role of the helpless mother, the heroine. Entering the battlefield at the moment at which the opposing armies are about to begin their engagement, she intensifies an already dramatic situation by first embracing and kissing her son Brennius, and then baring her breasts (41.126–31). These motherly actions help Tonwenna to perform female helplessness in order to have an emotional impact on her pugnacious sons. Geoffrey underscores the significance of this performance by assigning to her a speech of fifteen lines, one in which she succeeds as a female hero by articulating a convincing argument for peace that exploits the emotionalism of a heroine (41.133–47). By baring her breasts, the queen reminds Brennius of his natural link to his brother through her body that—as she pointedly reminds him—suffered terribly to give him life (41.133–36). Geoffrey’s decision to make Tonwenna’s bodily display and reference to childbirth the means of achieving peace and protecting the royal bloodline is striking for two reasons: it invokes the mother’s lactating and bleeding body in order to serve “a higher good,” the survival of the bloodline, and it enables that maternal body to represent “affection and maternal bonds” rather than “pollution and sin.”¹⁸⁴

Having used a mother’s tears to induce feelings of guilt and shame in her son, Tonwenna articulates two logical arguments meant to induce Brennius to accept his situation. First she argues that what Brennius terms his exile was actually his older brother’s way of forcing him to seek a more glorious position in the world (41.138–42). Then she reminds Brennius that he chose to rebel (41.145–46). Tonwenna reinforces her argument that Brennius is to blame through her choice of

phrasing: “Discidium inter uos ortum non per ipsum sed per te inceptum fuit [The cause of the dispute between you two was initiated not by him, but by you]” (41.145–46). Finally, she criticizes her rebellious son for involving the king of Norway in British affairs (41.146–47). Given that, before the thirteenth century, Norway lacked a process for orderly succession by a legitimate heir and consequently was known for its blood-drenched wars of succession, Tonwenna’s mention of Norway appears to be an additional means of blaming her son for importing disorder into Britain.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, given Tonwenna’s chastising tone, the implication of her mentioning the king of Norway’s involvement is that Brennius risked his homeland’s sovereignty by allowing a foreign king to attack Britain.

The results of this intervention are both powerful and immediate. Geoffrey describes Tonwenna’s son as being subdued by both her arguments and her tearful (and bare-breasted) delivery of them: “Super his igitur quae ipsa cum fletu expresserat motus, sedato animo oboediuit et ultro deposita galea cum illa ad fratrem perrexit [Therefore, moved by these (words) that she had tearfully expressed, he obeyed with a calm spirit, and—taking off his helmet—he went out through (the crowd) to his brother]” (41.148–49). In addition, Tonwenna’s performance of feminine vulnerability causes Brennius to let go of his “iram [anger]” at his brother Belinus and approach him in peace (41.137, 148–49). Her victory, however, is over something more significant than male misbehavior. It is over what Barefield calls “the hierarchy of inheritance and lineage”: this mother uses bodily authority to replace the one-heir agnatic model with the cognatic model “of commonality and equality.”¹⁸⁶ In this way, the queen not only ensures that the royal line will continue to function in a spirit of peace and justice through Belinus’s son Gurguint Barbruc but also prepares the way for the success of both of her sons (45.233–34).

Tonwenna’s success as a female hero is evident in the results of her verbal conquest of Brennius, results that transform her “male-dominant world.” The immediate effect of her intervention is the full reconciliation of her sons who become “amici facti [firm friends]” (41.151). This achievement, in turn, transforms the world Tonwenna inhabits by changing the course of European, rather than just British, history. Once Belinus and Brennius combine their forces, they conquer first Gaul and then Rome (42.157–63). As a result of their mother’s skilled mediation, the brothers conquer the greatest power in the ancient world (43.165–211). The brothers’ victory over Rome is swift because “nullam gentem saeuitiae Belini atque Brennii resistere ualere [no people had the strength to resist the ferocity/savagery of Belinus and Brennius]” (43.165–66). Both

of the possible meanings of *saeuitiae* are significant here, for Brennius turns out to be savagely oppressive as a ruler while his brother rules in peace and justice (44.212–29). The word, therefore, invites readers to differentiate between compassionate and tyrannical kingship as well as recall the good kingship of Dunuallo Molmutius. Although Tonwenna's impact on history is evident in her sons' conquest of Rome, it becomes more so when readers realize (later in *The History of the Kings of Britain*) that this queen's actions make possible the first of the Britons' three victories over Rome: the second is achieved by King Constantinus I who conquers the city, and the third by Arturus who is about to march on Rome—and thus complete his conquest—when he must return to Britain to fight a civil war against Modredus (80.163–64, 175.453–55, 176.480–84). Consequently, Tonwenna is a pivotal character in one of the main plotlines of Geoffrey's narrative: the power struggle between Britain and Rome. Moreover, she models the behavior that Geoffrey of Monmouth, through his diatribe about civil war and dedicatory preface, encourages the Normans to display: the creation of political unity through ending internecine conflict.

Tonwenna's determined and successful intervention as a female hero becomes even more striking, however, when readers compare her with the character that could have inspired her creation: Veturia from Livy's *Ab urbe condita*. Veturia, like Tonwenna, prevents her son from attacking his homeland and does so as a battle is about to begin.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, if Livy's history was his inspiration, Geoffrey decided to change both the circumstances and the outcome of the mother's intervention in ways that give his female figure a stronger and more positive impact than her Livian counterpart. The origin of Veturia's intervention is less than glorious, for Livy claims to be uncertain regarding whether the married women of Rome gather in response to "publicum consilium [official policy]" or "muliebris timor [womanly fear]."¹⁸⁸ The origin of Tonwenna's action, in contrast, is her own decision to intervene, so no one must convince Geoffrey's queen to act (41.126–28).¹⁸⁹ In Livy's story, it takes a group of women to convince Veturia and her daughter-in-law Volumnia to join them in defending Rome "precibus lacrimisque [with prayers and weeping]."¹⁹⁰ Moreover, because Veturia takes action as a member of a large group of women, her significance becomes diluted.¹⁹¹

The contrast between the circumstances and nature of the mothers' respective speeches makes Tonwenna the much more successful negotiator. Although Veturia's speech coincides with the desired outcome of preventing Coriolanus's attack upon his countrymen, the circumstances under which her son relents minimize his mother's impact on him. First, Coriolanus proves himself to be a true Roman in that, having pursued

his violent course of action despite appeals to both his patriotism and faith in the gods, he resists the women's tears "multo obstinator [a great deal more obstinately]" than the appeals of envoys and priests.¹⁹² Second, it is not Coriolanus but one of his friends who notices the mourning Veturia.¹⁹³ The maternal presence and tears are insufficient to move the son, for Coriolanus runs to greet his mother only after his friend helps him to notice his mother, wife, and children among the crowd.¹⁹⁴ Tonwenna, in contrast, intervenes successfully: she moves Brennius through a combination of tears and words—on her own (41.148–49).¹⁹⁵ Tonwenna's appeal to both her son's emotional bond with her and his powers of reason distinguishes it from Veturia's pure chastisement of her son, which she speaks in "iram [anger]" (41.133–47).¹⁹⁶

Nevertheless, it is in their respective effects that the two mothers' speeches differ the most profoundly. Veturia's speech has no immediate effect on Coriolanus's behavior.¹⁹⁷ In fact, it takes several forces to break his determination to attack Rome: the embraces of his wife and children, the weeping of all the women present, and the lamentations of the whole group of mourners for themselves and for Rome.¹⁹⁸ Because Livy's narration attributes no impact to the speech itself, Veturia's condemnation of her son for ruining her old age and making her regret being his mother appears to fall flat.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, although Veturia and her fellow matrons prevent a war, the long-term outcome of their action is negative: Coriolanus "invidia rei oppressum perisse [is said to have died, crushed by his resentment of this event]."²⁰⁰ In short, Veturia frames her argument negatively, fails to prevent the war through her words, and produces a mixed result. In contrast, Tonwenna inspires her son to become a true Briton through a positive message, alters her son's behavior through her words, and achieves more than her original goal of ending an ongoing civil war. Tonwenna's speech not only achieves peace between her sons but also, as reflected in Geoffrey's swiftly moving narrative, enables Belinus and Brennius to become rulers of Western Europe (42.148–43.211).²⁰¹ By giving Tonwenna's speech direct, immediate, and overwhelmingly positive results, Geoffrey makes her a pivotal figure in British history.

Female Cofounders of Royal Bloodlines

Although the remaining queen consorts in *The History of the Kings of Britain* contribute to British history through their traditional roles as wives and mothers, their stories enable Geoffrey to underscore—both early on and repeatedly—women's roles as female cofounders of royal bloodlines. This focus on Geoffrey's part could well have resulted from

his awareness of how Queen Matilda II, wife of King Henry I and mother of Empress Matilda, had legitimized her husband's reign through her descent from Scottish and Anglo-Saxon monarchs and cofounded a royal bloodline with him. This was the bloodline of Empress Matilda, who expected to succeed her father.

At the beginning of the Galfridian account of the founding of Britain, Lavinia confers legitimacy on Aeneas's kingship in Italy through marrying him (6.50–52). The fact that Aeneas “regnum Italiae et Lauiniam filiam Latini adeptus est [gained possession of the kingdom of Italy and Lavinia, daughter of Latinus]” makes Lavinia a pivotal figure in the founding of the new Roman bloodline, just as Matilda II was a pivotal figure in the founding of a new Norman bloodline with her husband Henry I (6.51–52). More specifically, Lavinia is like Matilda II in enabling a new king to legitimize his reign by linking himself to the royal line that he has just displaced. Innogin, daughter of King Pandrasus of the Greeks, performs the same pivotal function in the founding of the new kingdom of Britain, giving the royal line of British kings legitimacy through her ancient bloodline.

More significantly, however, Geoffrey quickly transforms Innogin's relationship with Brutus into something more than a “union of conqueror and conquered” resulting from an exchange of goods to save her father's life (14.237–41, 15.247–52).²⁰² Although Barefield interprets Innogin's departure from her homeland as a moment of “female loss, when the woman who has entered a dynastic marriage faces the erasure of her own lineage and racial identity,” Brutus's reaction to his wife's grief adds a human dimension to what might otherwise be the brutal political erasure Barefield identifies.²⁰³ When Brutus's new wife weeps and faints in response to seeing her homeland recede into the distance, he acts with compassion. As she faints, Brutus catches her “inter brachia [in his arms]” and then calms and comforts her, sometimes with “dulces amplexus [gentle embraces]” and sometimes with “dulcia basia [gentle kisses]” (15.271, 274). The final detail of Geoffrey's description, that Brutus does not cease his efforts to care for his wife until “fletu fatigata sopori summittitur [exhausted with tears, she fell asleep]” (16.275), demonstrates both that Innogin's feelings matter to Brutus and that he is more than a great warrior: he is a loving husband who offers comfort for as long as his wife needs it. By including these details in his account of Britain's founding, Geoffrey makes Brutus's begetting three sons upon Innogin the product of a loving marriage (23.1–2).

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen credits the Galfridian figure of Brutus with founding “a gender ideal” for men along with the nation of Britain; nevertheless, the ideal that Brutus founds blurs the boundary between

traditional masculinity and traditional femininity.²⁰⁴ Brutus possesses both the ability to fight and the ability to nurture. At the beginning of his narrative of the British past, therefore, Geoffrey of Monmouth presents his readers with a proto-romance episode in which the hero displays what Old and Middle English specialist Carolynne Larrington identifies as “civilized values in order to secure romantic love,” values that are “feminized” in the sense that Geoffrey is a clerical author attempting to shape chivalric behavior through his text.²⁰⁵ The Galfridian model of male heroism that Brutus embodies is noteworthy, for it antedates the medieval romances that focus on the respectful and loving treatment of the lady and exists outside of an explicitly Christian context: here a pagan warrior displays tenderness. In addition, because Brutus fulfills the roles of both warrior and nurturer, he escapes the boundaries of traditional gender roles.

Brutus’s founding of Britain is, of course, the action for which he is famous; nevertheless, this action becomes possible only because of his relationship with another female figure: the goddess Diana. Given that Geoffrey of Monmouth presents the Britons as God’s chosen people, it is striking that he does not demonize the pagan rituals and beliefs of Brutus and his fellow Trojans. Instead, he presents Brutus’s worship of Diana as normative, and he portrays the founder of Britain as communicating only with this deity. Geoffrey reports that the Trojans arrive at the island of *Leogetia*, where they find a temple to Diana in which there is a statue capable of answering a devotee’s question (16.275–82). The Trojans’ animal sacrifices receive neither editorial comments nor criticism (16.280–90). Geoffrey then lavishes narratorial attention on Brutus’s prayer to Diana and her response to it. These passages establish their own importance through their presentation in verse instead of prose, which makes them stand out from the main text. They also, however, establish both the greatness of Diana’s power and Brutus’s willingness to serve her if she tells him where to find his new home. Although Geoffrey could have had Brutus receive this prophecy from a male deity such as Jupiter or Mercury (whose altars, along with Diana’s, in this account form a pagan trinity that receives holy offerings) or Apollo (who does not appear in Brutus’s story, but is the Roman god of prophecy), he chooses to credit Diana with great power. Brutus addresses her as the “*diua potens nemonum, terror siluestribus apris* [powerful goddess of the forest, terror of the wild boars]” who can travel through the underworld and the earth as well as teach him where the Trojans will find a homeland (16.294–97). Diana’s prominence and power in Geoffrey’s twelfth-century text prepare the way for the similar prominence and power of Lady Fortune

in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, who likewise reveals a hero's future through a dream.²⁰⁶

Diana's status receives further enhancement when Brutus asks her to teach him how to find a home where he will be able to worship her "in aeuum [for all time]" and dedicate to her both temples and choirs of virgins (16.298–99). In response to his fervent prayer, Brutus receives a compelling vision in which the goddess tells him not only that he should seek the island he will name Britain but also that this island is uninhabited and therefore ready for Trojan colonization—a place that will be their home "perhennis [perpetually]" (16.309). Furthermore, this island will provide the setting for a second Troy where Brutus will found a race of kings "tocius terrae subditus orbis erit [to whom all the earth will be subject]" (16.312). In this way, Geoffrey provides an origin for the Britons' claim to divine favor that becomes palpable in Brutus's right, when fighting the Poitevins, "infelicem gentem usque ad unum delere [to annihilate the unhappy race down to its last man]" (19.394). Nevertheless, an often overlooked aspect of this episode is its entirely positive presentation of the goddess Diana and her role in the founding of Britain.

Diana's presentation in *The History of the Kings of Britain* contrasts sharply with the negative presentation of the female figures involved in an alternate account of the founding of Britain, written at least a century and a half after Geoffrey wrote his: the Anglo-Norman poem known as *Des grantz geanz*.²⁰⁷ Providing a backstory to the Galfridian account of how Brutus and his companions establish British civilization by driving the giants who inhabit the island into the mountains to dwell in caves (21.453–59), the legend involving Albina and her sisters presents these female founders as threats to both normative gender relations and civilization. It does so by characterizing the women as Greek princesses who not only refuse to obey male authority but also justify "a corrective to the earlier, transgressive act of female foundation": Brutus's refounding of Britain, which substitutes "Trojan masculinity" for a Greek society that is "monstrous and feminized."²⁰⁸ Through mating with *incubi* to produce giants, these women establish a "savage and monstrous community" that perpetuates itself by means of incest and yet has nearly destroyed itself by the time Brutus arrives—depopulation resulting from the giants' propensity for killing their own kind.²⁰⁹ In contrast to this misogynistic foundation myth, the Galfridian foundation myth integrates both 'feminine' nurturing and female wisdom by presenting Brutus as caring for his wife Innogin and obeying the goddess Diana.

Later in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, queen consorts continue to play pivotal roles in legitimizing the reign of a son or husband. For

example, King Bassianus gains the British throne because of the bloodlines from which he descends, but mainly because of his mother's bloodline. Bassianus is one of the two sons of Severus, a Roman who dies attempting to bring Britain under Roman control (74.11–32). Although the Romans crown Bassianus's brother Geta as king of Britain because "Geta Romana matre genitus erat [Geta was born to a Roman mother]," this strategy fails; instead, "quod abnegantes Britanni Bassianum elegerunt quia materno sanguine ipsis coniunctus erat [because the Britons had refused (him), they elected Bassianus, for he was related to them by maternal blood]" (74.32–36). Geoffrey's story then stresses the worthiness of the king-candidate who possesses the right type of mother (a British one), for Bassianus defeats and kills his half-brother Geta in battle. After his victory, Bassianus takes possession of the realm (74.37). In a similar manner, Maximianus gains the kingship of Britain through his wife, who is the only child of King Octavius. Because she is her father's only heir, the marriage of Octavius's daughter—like that of Lavinia—confers a kingdom on her husband (81.196–98). Wanting to arrange a match that will bring "stabilitatem pacis [lasting peace]" (81.206–7), the king's advisors recommend Senator Maximianus as the best choice of husband for her. Maximianus becomes heir to the British throne because he is "ex origine Britonum [of British origin]" through his father and "ex genere imperatorum [from the family of emperors]" through his mother (81.207–8).

Geoffrey then reinforces the idea that the matriline matters by having Octavius's advisor, Duke Caradocus of Cornwall, present Maximianus's claim to the British throne as legally unassailable for a specific reason: "Constantini etenim consanguineus est et nepos Coel nostri regis, cuius filiam Helenam nequimus abnegare hereditario iure regnum istud possidere [Indeed, he is related by blood to Constantinus and is the nephew of our king Coel, whose daughter Helena we cannot deny is master of this kingdom by hereditary right]" (83.291–93, my emphasis). Having made it clear that Maximianus is worthy of occupying the British throne because of his blood connections to two female relatives (his mother and Helena), Geoffrey then demonstrates that this marriage offers exactly what Maximianus seeks: the gold, silver, and soldiers necessary to defeat the Roman emperors and capture Rome (81.227–31). Although Maximianus is murdered in Rome before he can capture the city, his marriage to the daughter of Octavius enables him to conquer both Gaul and Germany (88.408–10, 86.355–57). Throughout his history, therefore, Geoffrey reminds readers of the female contribution to the founding and perpetuation of the British bloodline.

The pivotal positions that Geoffrey assigns to female figures playing traditional gender roles indicate the feminist sympathies at work in his version of the early British past. Nevertheless, these feminist sympathies emerge most strongly when Geoffrey presents female kings and female king-candidates, and it is his presentation of female kingship that makes his contribution to medieval historiography unique.

Female Kings as Correctives to Male Misdeeds

Over half a century ago, in his groundbreaking study of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Tatlock remarked that “it is impossible that Geoffrey was unaware of the appositeness of his reigning queens” to Empress Matilda’s situation; shortly thereafter, fellow Arthurian literature specialists John Jay Parry and Robert A. Caldwell noted that “the pictures of good and highly capable queens were probably written to prepare the way for rule by Matilda.”²¹⁰ Nevertheless, the significance of these female rulers has never received much scholarly attention. Examination of the non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey’s history, however, reveals a narrative pattern that makes this book a feminist text for its time: the overwhelmingly positive presentation of female kings, specifically the contrast between competent and moral female kings and their often incompetent and/or immoral male counterparts.

This pattern is noteworthy for several reasons. The first is that Geoffrey’s presentation of female figures differs fundamentally from the medieval norms of either relegating female figures to the margins of historiography (as Gildas, Bede, and the author of *The History of Britain* do) or making them central to an account of the past because they preserve their virginity or chastity, as fourteenth-century humanist Giovanni Boccaccio does.²¹¹ The second is that Geoffrey does not treat women who rule well as a separate category from ‘normal’ women, unlike Boccaccio who treats good women as exceptional and categorizes virtuous women as honorary men.²¹² The third reason is that, in contrast to the often undeveloped portraits of one hundred and fourteen rulers from Brutus (c. 1100 BC) to Cadualadrus (d. AD 689) that Geoffrey presents, those of the three female kings are developed in ways that underscore their worthiness to rule. Finally, Geoffrey’s creation, positive presentation, and integration of these figures into his narrative suggests that Fries’s schema for Arthurian females must be expanded to include two additional categories—those of female king and female king-candidate—if it is to be applied to the whole of Geoffrey’s history. The uniqueness of Geoffrey’s contribution to medieval historiography becomes all the more evident when readers

note that Geoffrey positions the stories of Guendoloena, Cordeilla, and Marcia early on in his book. By doing so, he creates ancient precedents for female kingship and thereby makes it normative, rather than exceptional, while presenting it as benefitting early Britain. More specifically, as he develops the stories of these three female kings, Geoffrey emphasizes their competence and morality—traits that make them superior to the majority of male kings—perhaps in order to encourage readers of the late 1130s to look forward to Matilda's reign.

The reign of Guendoloena shows readers that a woman can be a more moral and more competent ruler than a man, for she seizes power from her dishonest, adulterous husband Locrinus and then reigns successfully for many years. Guendoloena demonstrates her moral superiority to her husband Locrinus in three ways. The first is that, while Locrinus carries on an affair with his German mistress Estrildis for seven years and then tries to cast his lawful wife aside, Guendoloena fulfills her functions as queen consort—including the politically essential function of producing a son (24.40–25.53). The second way is that she receives the backing of all the young men of Cornwall (her home region) when she gathers the troops that will enable her to regain the power her husband has conferred on his mistress, a detail which stresses the justice of her cause and makes her a reformer rather than a rebel or invader (25.53–55). The unanimous support she receives, perhaps not coincidentally, likens her to King Arturus whose power derives from “*iuventus omnium insularum* [all the young men of the islands]” (155.255–56). This support is appropriate given that Guendoloena's reign has its origin in righting her husband's moral wrong. The third way in which she proves her moral superiority is to triumph as a military leader. When Locrinus dies after being struck with an arrow as he leads troops against his wife's supporters, Guendoloena becomes the apparent beneficiary of God's backing the side of right on the battlefield (25.55–57).

For Norman readers who linked Locrinus's death with that of King Harold II (who reputedly died of an arrow through the eye in the Battle of Hastings), Guendoloena would become the ‘Norman’ king and Locrinus the ‘Saxon’ one who must make way for the leader whom God has chosen to rule Britain. Geoffrey then suggests both this woman's competence to rule and her moral justification for doing so by having Guendoloena rule for fifteen years—when her husband ruled for only ten (26.65–66)—and reporting no problems during her reign. Although Olson has characterized Guendoloena as a queen who “invades her husband's kingdom,” Geoffrey's narration of both the war she fights and her reign position Guendoloena as a legitimate ruler who is her husband's as well as her father's successor.²¹³ She is her father Corineus's successor

in that she emulates him by becoming Britain's guardian: she eliminates the threat to British sovereignty over the island that Habren represents, thereby finishing the work of her father who backed his criticism of Locrinus's inappropriate desire for Estrildis with an attempt on the king's life (24.30–39).²¹⁴ As Locrinus's successor, she also emulates her husband. Just as Locrinus drove King Humber of the Huns into the river that drowned him but thereafter bore the enemy king's name, Guendoloena has her husband's illegitimate daughter Habren drowned in the river that then bears the child's name (24.15–19). More importantly, Guendoloena is Locrinus's successor in acceding to the British throne.

The only potential flaw in Guendoloena's character, that of extreme anger, turns out not to be one; on the contrary, Geoffrey's narration valorizes rather than villainizes her. Having avenged both her own and her father's honor by defeating her dishonest husband on the battlefield, Guendoloena becomes a female king and—like many a male king in *The History of the Kings of Britain*—eliminates her remaining enemies. Having both Estrildis and Habren drowned might seem extreme to readers today, but, given that Estrildis has supplanted Guendoloena as queen consort and Habren is a potential heir to the British throne, Guendoloena is wise to eliminate these foreign threats to her power (25.58–61). Moreover, despite the fact that this female king is “paterna insania furens [raging with paternal extravagance]” (25.58), Geoffrey criticizes her no more than he does her equally strong-willed father Corineus (24.27–51). Like her father's anger, Guendoloena's anger is justified and forces Locrinus to conform to the moral code palpable throughout Geoffrey's history: kings must put good government before personal desires. In addition, nowhere does Geoffrey question either this female king's seizing of power or her competence as a ruler, and he expresses no sympathy for Locrinus once the king violates that moral code.²¹⁵ Although scholars have traditionally associated Guendoloena's fiery temper with Matilda's reputation for bad-tempered behavior, Guendoloena's ruthlessness in battle could reflect either Empress Matilda's ruthless treatment of her enemy Ralph of Esson throughout his captivity that began during the Lenten season of 1138, or the martial exploits of Gwenllïan, wife of the Welsh Marcher lord Gruffudd ap Rhys ap Tewdwr.²¹⁶

More importantly, because Geoffrey chooses not to brand as problematic or inappropriate a traditionally masculine trait in a woman, Guendoloena has freedom from the strictures of traditional gender roles that female characters in the medieval literary tradition usually lack. For example, as German literature specialist Susann T. Samples notes, Heinrich von dem Türlin's thirteenth-century romance *Diu Crône* not only presents “ambition” as an “unfeminine trait” but also uses the word

hōchwart ‘arrogance’ in a way that “implies a double standard: unlike male characters, whose ambition is greatly admired, female characters are not supposed to be ambitious—at least not for political power.”²¹⁷ Furthermore, Guendoloena’s masculine anger does not change the fact that her reign is a corrective to her husband’s moral weakness and dishonesty.

Most importantly, however, Guendoloena performs all the functions of a king: she gathers and leads troops, wins her war against Locrinus, and (as her strong-willed father Corineus would have done) kills her husband’s mistress and illegitimate child. Through these actions, Guendoloena preserves both the Britons’ ethnic purity and their sovereignty over the island. Although this female king’s execution of two women has the potential to ruin her image as a ruler, Geoffrey does not label this action as immoral or even morally questionable (25.58–64). Instead, this female king retains a positive image within the world of *The History of the Kings of Britain*. One reason for her positive image is that Geoffrey presents the drowning of Estrildis and her daughter Habren as an execution, not a murder: the fact that Guendoloena “iubet [ordered]” that the two women be thrown into the river makes their deaths the result of official kingly action (25.58). Moreover, Guendoloena does not attempt to hide her action from public view; on the contrary, she “edictum per totam Britanniam ut flumen nomine puellae uocaretur [proclaimed that, through all Britain, the river should be called by the name of the young woman]” (25.60–61). A second reason for her positive image is that, by executing these two women, Guendoloena eradicates a major threat to the legitimate royal bloodline: one of the messages of this story is, therefore, that Locrinus’s desire for Estrildis is inappropriate and imperils the succession of the legitimate son he has had with his lawful wife. A third and final reason for Guendoloena’s retaining such a positive image within Geoffrey’s history is the explanation he provides for the female king’s choice of naming the river after her husband’s illegitimate daughter: “Uolebat etenim honorem aeternitatis illi impendere quia maritus suus eam generauerat [Indeed, she wished to devote to (Habren) the honor of immortality because (Guendoloena’s) husband had begotten her]” (25.61–62). Thus, even while fulfilling her duty to protect British sovereignty, Guendoloena honors the royal blood in this illegitimate child. The fact that Habren’s name lives on, for the Britons still call the river by the young woman’s name according to Geoffrey, leaves readers with the impression that the river becomes a memorial to Habren (25.61–63). This memorial shifts attention away from the execution itself, and it resolves the issue of Locrinus’s infidelity to both his wife and his people.

Even when Guendoloena chooses to give the crown to her son as a result of his coming of age, the manner in which she does so demonstrates her complete control over the succession. Her conferral of the crown makes it evident that royal power resides in her: “Cum uidisset Maddan filium suum aetate adultum, sceptro regni insigniuit illum, contenta regione Cornubiae dum reliquum uitae deduceret [When she saw that her son Maddan was mature in age, she crowned him with the scepter of the realm, content that she rule in the region of Cornwall for the remainder of her life]” (26.66–68). Obviously, Geoffrey could not have foreseen that Matilda would eventually relinquish her claim to the English throne when her son, the future King Henry II, became Stephen’s heir in 1153, but Geoffrey’s story of Guendoloena points to one possible life path Matilda could have pursued: reigning until her son reached his majority. Furthermore, if the morally corrupt King Locrinus is interpreted as a stand-in for Stephen who had usurped the throne and betrayed the church, then this story justifies Matilda’s taking the throne from Stephen in battle. Taken as a whole, therefore, the reign of Guendoloena offers a fictional but suggestive version of Empress Matilda’s career after 1138: she punishes the wrongdoing of her male opponent on the battlefield, rules successfully for many years, and then peacefully grants the kingdom to her rightful heir (at a moment of her choosing) before retiring to her home region to reign there.

Finally, Guendoloena’s reign gains historical validity because Geoffrey includes a synchronism at this point in his narrative and grants her a dominion after she gives the British crown to her son. This synchronism validates her reign by anchoring it within a worldwide historical context: “Tunc Samuel propheta regnabat in Iudaea et Siluius Aeneas uiuebat adhuc et Omerus clarus rethor et poeta habebatur [At that time the prophet Samuel was reigning in Judea, and Siluius Aeneas was still alive, and Homer was considered a famous author and poet]” (26.68–69). Her reign gains additional validity when, after she confers the throne on her son, Britain’s first female king retains a lesser throne (that of Cornwall) until her death—and reigns alone (26.67–68). Thus, Guendoloena continues to demonstrate her competence as a ruler until the very end of her life, offering a means for Geoffrey to present female rule as the positive outcome of particular political circumstances. Although she finally turns out to be a regent, Guendoloena proves herself to be a better warrior than her husband and functions as a king after displacing a man whose illicit desire makes him unfit to rule. With Guendoloena having established a precedent for female kingship, Geoffrey’s other female kings reign until their deaths.

Marcia is more than a function of Geoffrey’s attempt to set aside Anglo-Saxon cultural icons such as King Alfred: she is the intellectual,

and perhaps moral, superior of her husband King Guithelinus.²¹⁸ Although Guithelinus reigns “benigne et modeste [benevolently and with moderation]” until his death, that is all Geoffrey says about him (47.257). Guithelinus’s wife Marcia, in contrast, receives much more narrative space, and it is Marcia whom the historian describes as possessing the gifts of an effective leader. She is not only noble and learned in all arts but also achieves more than her husband, even while he is still alive (47.257–58). Before Guithelinus’s death, she both designs the law code called the Merchenelage and creates “multa et inaudita quae proprio ingenio reppererat [many and incredible things that she invented through her own natural genius]” (47.258–59). Marcia’s active role in government makes her a full partner in her husband’s reign and, based on the lack of detail about Guithelinus’s acts, the more important one. In addition, once the crown passes to her and her seven-year-old son Sisillius upon Guithelinus’s death (47.261–62), the details that Geoffrey includes present Marcia as a female king rather than a mere regent. First, Geoffrey is careful to note that at the age of seven, Sisillius “nec aetas ipsius expetebat ut regnum moderationi illius cessisset [had not reached the age at which the realm could be yielded to his government]” (47.263). Then, he presents as a logical conclusion that, because of Marcia’s “consilio [wisdom]” and “sensu [moral sense],” she “imperium totius insulae optinuit [obtained rule over the entire island]” (47.264–65). These details underscore Marcia’s full qualifications for kingship and possession of the entire realm as well as suggest her intellectual, and perhaps moral, superiority to her husband. Her displaying “moral sense” as opposed to mere benevolence makes her Guithelinus’s moral superior, based on the information Geoffrey provides.

By adding to her story the detail that Marcia rules until her death rather than until her son reaches his majority, Geoffrey not only suggests that she is a very capable leader but also transforms what would otherwise be mere regency into female kingship. The implication here is that, under Marcia’s excellent stewardship, there is no need for her son to govern until his wise mother can no longer do so. Geoffrey’s silence regarding how old Sisillius is at the time of his mother’s death even leaves open the possibility that she rules for many years after her son has reached his majority. Finally, Geoffrey’s choice to say nothing about Sisillius’s reign other than that he “sumpto diademate gubernaculo potitus est [took possession of the crown, assuming control of the government]” reinforces the readers’ impression that Marcia was a better king than most of her male counterparts, including her son and husband (47.265–66). The account of Marcia’s reign stands out in part because of the bare mentions of her predecessor and successor, but it is her ruling until her death that

demonstrates that a woman is fully worthy of ruling in her own right. If Norman readers linked the well-educated and politically wise Marcia with Empress Matilda, then they might have viewed Marcia's story as illustrating what the empress's career could have been like had she been accepted as king immediately upon her father's death.

The reign of King Leir's daughter Cordeilla, Geoffrey's third female king, provides the most powerful model of female kingship in his history. She is much more than a *pia filia*, 'dutiful daughter' (to borrow a term from historian Georges Duby).²¹⁹ One reason for this is that Cordeilla, like Guendoloena, embodies integrity and a desire to correct moral wrongs and, like Marcia, embodies wisdom; consequently, she proves herself worthy to rule. She demonstrates her integrity by first refusing to lie to her father—as her sisters do—in order to gain an inheritance and then trying to help him recognize her sisters' lies (31.151–62). In an attempt to correct the moral wrong that her father has committed by setting up the love test as well as the wrongs that her sisters have committed by lying, Cordeilla tries to save her father from the consequences of a poor decision-making process grounded in foolish credulity—risking her own inheritance as she does so. Cordeilla assures Leir that she loves him, while expressing her doubt that a daughter can love a father as much as Gonorilla and Regau have sworn they do; she even hints at what motivates her sisters' words of 'love' by claiming that she loves him in direct proportion to what he owns (31.156–62). Later on, Cordeilla displays her wisdom by protecting her father from the humiliation of appearing at the French court in his bedraggled state (31.237–43). In all of her actions, this daughter shows that she returns the "miro amore [extraordinary love]" that her father feels for all of his daughters, but especially for her (31.138–39).

Another reason for which Cordeilla's model of female kingship is particularly powerful is that she is active in government before she inherits the British throne and highly competent after she inherits it. She and her husband King Aganippus restore Leir's kingly dignity even before he leaves France to avenge the usurpation of his throne: they grant him jurisdiction over all of France until they can help him regain possession of Britain (31.247–49). Later, after Leir's death, Cordeilla inherits the throne in her own right and again proves her loyalty to her father by burying him in the underground chamber that had been built at his command (31.255–57). The dedication of this chamber to the Janus (Roman god of doorways, beginnings, and endings) is also significant: having lost both her husband and her father, Cordeilla makes a new start as a female king who rules alone, and Britain receives a new start through her leadership (31.257–59). Geoffrey's choice of having Aganippus die

and Cordeilla inherit the throne as a widow offers another idealized version of Matilda's life. Whereas Matilda inherited her father's throne when her second husband Count Geoffrey of Anjou was still alive, Cordeilla's French husband is already dead when she inherits; consequently, Leir's daughter is a *feme sole*, 'a woman acting alone, without a male guardian.'²²⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth's creative storytelling likewise eliminates a problem that Matilda faced: tension within her second marriage. In contrast to Matilda and her French husband, Cordeilla and Aganippus are a love-match, work together to govern their people, and help an elderly king to regain power.²²¹ Although Cordeilla's story might be Geoffrey's means of demonstrating that a widow ruling alone is better off than one whose remarriage creates political complications, its most important aspect is that Cordeilla reigns "pacifice [peacefully]" for five years—a situation suggesting her competence as a ruler (32.260–62). In a history in which the threat of civil war is ever present, to label a king as reigning peacefully is high praise indeed; this is especially true of Cordeilla because she appears in its non-Arthurian portion, in which instability predominates.

Perhaps to encourage King Henry I's nephew Stephen to acknowledge Matilda's claim to the English throne, Geoffrey then underscores Cordeilla's right to rule Britain through his description of both those who rebel against her and her reaction to deposition.²²² Creating a plotline that implicitly critiques Stephen's usurpation of the throne without risking an accusation of treason, Geoffrey reinforces Cordeilla's image as worthy to rule: he does not fault her in any way. Moreover, he makes it clear that her nephews rebel because "*indignati sunt Britanniam femineae potestati subditam esse* [they were indignant that Britain should be subject to the rule of a woman]" and brands the nephews' rebellion against their female king as "*saeuiciae* [savagery/barbarity]" (32.265–67).²²³ To call men savage, even barbaric, for overthrowing a female king specifically because of her gender is a powerful statement of support for female rule. However, the narration not only says that these nephews are barbaric but also shows them to be so: first they destroy provinces within their aunt's realm, and then they fight a violent civil war (32.266–82). By the end of Cordeilla's story, therefore, readers are likely to interpret the abrupt end of her reign as doubly tragic: a tragedy for Britain due to the destruction her nephews cause by fighting two civil wars (one against their aunt, and one against each other) and a tragedy for her personally.²²⁴ Although Geoffrey could not have known in 1138 that Matilda would later suffer defeat at Stephen's hands, his presentation of a female king's defeat as tragic puts emotional pressure on Norman readers not yet supporting Matilda.

The narrative details that Marganus, the elder of Cordeilla's two nephews, "ignemque accumulare incepit [began to heap up fire upon fire]" and did so because of "quibus turbatio regni placebat [those who took pleasure in the disruption of the kingdom]" are noteworthy for two reasons (32.273–77). First, they reinforce the message that civil war is the greatest of political wrongs because it causes material damage to the kingdom. Second, they suggest that rule by the most qualified individual—not the eldest son—is in the kingdom's best interest. Marganus is not, according to Geoffrey, justified in attacking his brother simply because he is the eldest son and has listened to people who have convinced him that, as the first-born child, he has the right to rule the entire island. In fact, Geoffrey's characterizing these advisors as people who enjoy fomenting discord makes it clear that Marganus is not in the right (32.273–75). Therefore, by describing how Cunedagius defeats his brother in battle and then reigns "gloriose [gloriously]" for thirty-three years (perhaps a messianic number), Geoffrey reinforces the message that the right to rule depends on the king-candidate's personal qualities rather than on birth order or gender (32.283). This is a message that Empress Matilda, like her father (the youngest of three sons), would have found pleasing.

When Geoffrey has his third female king kill herself because of her overwhelming sorrow at her loss of political power, he implies the necessity and morality of supporting a legitimate female ruler over a dishonest and/or incompetent male. Although Cordeilla commits suicide after losing political power, Geoffrey does not judge her act as sinful or cowardly. By stating simply "ob amissionem regni dolore obducta sese interfecit [on account of being overwhelmed by grief after her loss of royal power, she killed herself]," Geoffrey gives Cordeilla an honorable death by her own hand—a death like that of a defeated Roman leader such as Mark Antony (32.269–70).²²⁵ Furthermore, through her response to losing the throne, Cordeilla reveals herself to be fully invested in her identity as a politically active and powerful woman: when she cannot wield power, she considers her life to be over. Given that Heinrich von dem Türlin requires that the "strong female monarch" in his romance called *The Crown* give up both "her independence and kingdom" without protest, Geoffrey's portrayal of Cordeilla's reign emerges as an exception to the misogynist rule of the medieval period.²²⁶ Precedents for female kingship are one product of Geoffrey's completing his history the year before Empress Matilda began her campaign to take the throne that was rightfully hers; however, as the next section will demonstrate, Geoffrey's two examples of potential female kingship constitute another.

Female King-Candidates and the Consequences of Thwarting of Female Rule

Having established precedents for female rule early in his history of Britain, a history to which he gave the gender-neutral title of *Concerning the Deeds of the Britons*, Geoffrey of Monmouth examines female rule from a different perspective later on: that of female heirs who could have—and should have—become kings of Britain. Given that Geoffrey probably began his history shortly before King Henry I's death in 1135, the problems of a king without a male heir were ones with which both Geoffrey and his Norman readers would have been concerned. The stories of Helena, daughter of King Coel, and King Octavius's daughter provide the narrative space in which Geoffrey can explore the issue of the female heir as well as suggest how the Norman nobles of his own day might respond to it. However, by exploring this issue within the framework of a mythical past, Geoffrey avoids taking an overtly pro-Matilda position during the early years of Stephen's disputed reign.

The story of Helena presents the problematic fate of a royal daughter whose father dies, leaving her to rely on other noblemen to support her as a king-candidate. King Coel, like King Henry I, gains his throne through a willingness to rebel against the previous king and seize the crown but then finds himself in the awkward position of having only one heir, a daughter (78.122–24, 140). Also like King Henry I, King Coel dies suddenly, leaving behind a daughter who is prepared to rule and whom her father intended to do so (78.135–36). Geoffrey's description of Helena underscores how carefully her father prepared for her reign:

Pulcritudo eius prouinciales puellas superabat, nec uspiam reperiebatur altera quae in musicis instrumentis siue in liberalibus artibus doctior illa censeretur. Caruerat pater alia sobole quae solio regni potiretur, unde eam ita docere laborauerat ut regimen patriae post obitum suum facilius tractare quuisset. (78.138–42)

[She surpassed other young women in the country in beauty, and her equal in playing musical instruments was not to be found anywhere, or a woman judged to be more learned in the liberal arts. Lacking any other offspring to inherit the throne, her father had taken pains to educate her in such a way that she could rule the country more easily when he died.]

This description of Helena is noteworthy for two reasons. One is that it presents the womanly attributes of beauty and competence in music as compatible with the kind of learning in the liberal arts that Geoffrey references when praising his character Queen Marcia and his patron Robert of Gloucester; therefore, it attributes to Helena the education that

prepares a person to govern a realm while still characterizing her as fully feminine (47.256–61, 3.17–23). The other is that this description suggests that King Coel, like King Henry I, expected his daughter to reign after him and had made what he thought were the necessary preparations for her to succeed him. Geoffrey underscores Helena's right to rule by having Duke Caradocus of Cornwall give a speech in which he reviews King Octavius's options with regard to choosing his successor but ends by referring to "*Coel nostri regis, cuius filiam Helenam nequimus abnegare hereditario iure regnum istud possidere* [our king Coel, whose daughter Helena we cannot deny is master of this kingdom by hereditary right]" (83.291–93). What is striking about this situation is that, despite the men's arguing about which man should gain the throne through marriage, it is the woman herself who has the right to rule Britain.

Helena does not get her opportunity to reign, however, because Constantius becomes king upon Coel's death while Helena becomes a queen consort and mother of a king rather than a female king. Nevertheless, Geoffrey's phrasing of Constantius's accession is noteworthy: "*Quo defuncto, insigniuit se Constantius regni diademate duxitque filiam Coel, cui nomen erat Helena* [Upon (Coel's) death, Constantius crowned himself with the crown of the kingship and married the daughter of Coel, whose name was Helena]" (78.136–37). Although Geoffrey does not overtly criticize Constantius's actions, Constantius is the subject of a phrase that portrays him as taking the crown and the king's daughter—ignoring the king's wishes and plans. In addition, the end of Helena's story makes it clear that, once married, Helena's historical significance derives solely from her role as the mother of a king: "*Cum igitur illam in societatem thori recepisset Constantius, generauit ex ea filium uocauitque eum Constantinum* [After Constantius had received her into the union of the marriage bed, he begat upon her a son and called him Constantinus]" (78.142–43). This phrasing underscores that marriage strips this female king-candidate of her power: once married, she becomes merely a receptacle for her husband's seed.

By creating a plotline in which a female heir to the throne has been prepared to rule and then—perhaps against her will—becomes a queen consort, Geoffrey encourages readers to note first that a qualified female heir is in danger of sinking to the status of queen consort when she marries, and second that a king cannot control what happens after his death. Although Helena's uncles become senators as a result of Constantinus's conquest of Rome, she loses her status as a king-candidate (80.163–66). Perhaps this story reflects Geoffrey's fear that Stephen's successful usurpation would result in Matilda's loss of her rightful place in history, and Helena's problematic fate is an attempt to encourage commitment to

the rightful female king. Geoffrey's interest in focusing on the political impact of this female king-candidate is evident in his omission of what Bede reports about her, that she finds the True Cross in Jerusalem; moreover, his omission of Bede's characterization of her as Constantius's "concubina [concubine]" is consistent with Geoffrey's general tendency to present female figures more positively than his fellow historians present them.²²⁷

King Octavius, like King Coel, has a daughter as his only heir: "Vnicam tantum filiam habens, filio caruerat cui regimen patriae permitteret [Having only a single daughter, he lacked a son to whom he could entrust control of the country]" (81.196–97). In this respect, Octavius is in the same situation as King Henry I was at the end of his life. King Octavius, like Coel before him, wins the British throne through rebellion and murder: while Coel kills King Asclepiodotus in battle, Octavius has Constantinus's general (and Helena's uncle) murdered in order to regain the throne (78.122–24, 80.183–90). This portrait of Octavius's wresting control of Britain from the Romans through an ignoble process might have reminded Norman readers of both Henry I's possibly murderous path to the throne (his brother William Rufus died in a convenient hunting accident) and his consolidation of power in England and Normandy, despite opposition from both his brothers and other noblemen. In Octavius's story, however, the king with a daughter as his only heir decides to transfer his power to another nobleman through her; neither he nor his counselors consider the possibility of a woman's ruling Britain in her own right, as King Henry did. Instead, Octavius's counselors offer two options to the king: the first is to give his daughter and crown to a Roman nobleman and thereby increase the likelihood of peace, and the second is to crown his nephew Conanus Meriadocus and marry his daughter to a foreign king (81.196–201). Given that King Henry I married his daughter Matilda first to a 'Roman' (the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V) and then to a foreigner (an Angevin) in order to secure peace, and later designated her rather than his nephew as his heir, the story of Octavius's daughter provides Geoffrey with another opportunity to reflect on the empress's life.

Norman readers would likely have noted how the early Britons' lack of support for this female heir results in political disaster for Britain. For example, when the duke of Cornwall presents his argument for the first option, Octavius's nephew becomes "indignatus...totamque curiam propter talia turbauit [furious...and disrupt(s) the whole court on account of his plans]" (81.208–10). This moment would likely have reminded Norman readers of Stephen's overriding Henry's plan (that Matilda rule) by seizing the throne, and the disruption that Conanus's

usurpation causes would have reminded them of the major disruption that Stephen's usurpation caused—a disruption that in 1138 was about to become civil war. Following Conan's usurpation, the situation in Geoffrey's story deteriorates. First, Maximianus receives the offer of the crown of Britain, attacks and conquers France, and builds a huge army that (in combination with some adept lying about his purpose) enables him to intimidate Conan into accepting peace (82.232–73). Then, after Octavius gives both the throne and his daughter to Maximianus, Conan rebels with the result that he and Maximianus fight a series of battles and make peace only “*cum alter alteri dampnum maximum intulisset* [when each man had caused the greatest damage to the other]” (83.304). Finally, after Maximianus has reigned for five years, his wealth makes him so haughty that he not only attacks France—rejoicing when he kills 15,000 men—but also buys Conan's loyalty through making him ruler of Brittany, an action that enables Maximianus to continue to ravage France (84.306–30). During this final phase of his career, Maximianus acts with such “*saeuitia* [savagery]” (85.332) that he kills every Frenchman under his power, throws France into political chaos, and kills the two Roman emperors who had denied him power earlier on (85.331–86.359). In addition, his stripping Britain of much-needed defenders leaves the island open to attack by the Huns and Picts, and his murder leads to the slaughter of many of his soldiers (88.395–410). The disastrous results of both Conan's rebellion and Maximianus's tyrannical reign teach readers the same lesson as the other stories of female kings and king-candidates: supporting the legitimate heir who is prepared to rule, regardless of the heir's gender or birth order, keeps the peace.

Geoffrey's creation of three female figures who have the opportunity to serve as kings and two female king-candidates who are in line for the throne and capable of ruling cannot be treated as random exceptions to the rule of male kingship. These five stories, all of which foreground a female figure that is both a legitimate heir and prepared to fulfill the duties of kingship, constitute a pattern that presumably reflects a choice on Geoffrey's part. Through these stories, Geoffrey presents supporting the legitimate heir—whether male or female—as crucial to the maintenance of political stability, and he presents the lack of support for legitimate female heirs as an error that leads to civil war and all the unnecessary suffering it brings. Given that Geoffrey completed his history shortly before January 1139, its likely purpose was to encourage the Normans to support Empress Matilda's campaign to obtain the English throne that was rightfully hers. By linking the stories of Kings Maximianus and Gratianus as well as those of Constans, Vortegirinus, and Vortimerius, Geoffrey portrays Britain as a land in desperate need of kings who are both moral and

just. In addition, these stories contribute to a metanarrative of kingship that presents female kingship as a desirable alternative to rule by males.

The Superiority of Female Kings

Geoffrey's portraits of noble and effective female kings gain additional significance within the metanarrative of kingship he develops, one in which he contrasts examples of bad male kings with those of good female kings and qualified female king-candidates. Readers cannot fail to notice that Geoffrey does not present a single example of an incompetent or morally corrupt female ruler. In fact, the closest he comes to criticizing a female king is in his portrait of Guendoloena where he describes her as "*paterna insania furens [raging with paternal frenzy]*" (25.58), and that trait likens her to her heroic giant-killing father Corineus. More importantly, however, Geoffrey's metanarrative of kingship in early Britain positions both female kings and female king-candidates as an attractive alternative to the havoc that several groups of problematic male kings cause: these men display behavior ranging from weak and foolish leadership to sexual misconduct, tyranny, warmongering, and murder.

The history's first group of kings creates sharp contrasts between strong, just rulers and corrupt, tyrannical ones that highlight Guendoloena's function as the corrector of her husband's wrongs. After Brutus founds Britain and (for twenty-four years) sets an example of good kingship by leading his men into battle, building his city, and establishing a law code through which his people can live in peace, his son Locrinus offers one of bad kingship (20.427–44, 22.504–5). Although Locrinus peacefully shares power with his brothers, defeats the Huns, and shares with his men the booty he wins, he loses the throne because of his passionate and inappropriate desire for the German princess Estrildis (23.12–24.27). Having lived a double life and thereby begotten an illegitimate daughter, Locrinus triggers the civil war that results in his death by replacing his rightful queen consort with his mistress (24.40–25.57). Guendoloena's rage—though great—is righteous anger: Geoffrey as narrator blames her neither for indirectly causing the death of her unfaithful husband on the battlefield nor for executing his mistress and illegitimate daughter. The contrast between Locrinus's dishonest and immoral behavior and Guendoloena's honorable rectification of it highlights this king's primary failing: putting his desire for a foreign woman before his political and familial obligations.

Geoffrey reinforces this good king/bad king contrast by having Guendoloena reign for fifteen years and then her son Maddan reign peacefully and frugally for forty years; Maddan is nothing like either his

lustful father or his lustful, murderous successor Mempricius (26.65–66, 26.70–71). Mempricius's example, both because he is the worst of the early kings and because his reign follows that of Guendoloena's son, increases readers' appreciation of the female king's reign. Mempricius kills his own brother to obtain the throne, becomes power-mad once he possesses it, and deserts his wife to indulge in sodomy (26.73–81). Geoffrey brands this king "tantam tyrannidem [such a tyrant]" (26.76) because his crimes are heinous: he murders any family member who might succeed him, and he is consistently "non naturalem uenerem naturali libidini praefere[n]s [choosing unnatural vice rather than natural desire]" (26.77–81). Mempricius's horrible death—getting eaten by a pack of wolves after he leaves his hunting party—appears to be God's way of punishing this tyrant's ravenous appetite for both power and illicit sex (26.81–84).²²⁸ Although Susan M. Schwartz labels Mempricius as "another king from whom God turned," it is noteworthy that Geoffrey neither makes the sexual sin the primary issue nor connects sodomy with feminization of the man engaging in it, an idea that twelfth-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen expresses.²²⁹ Instead, because his interest is political rather than moral, Geoffrey focuses on how immorality produces unjust rule.

The remaining members of the first group of kings are not as repugnant as Mempricius, but the failings of some of Cordeilla's predecessors and successors highlight both her role as the corrector of her father's errors and the model of peaceful rule she provides.²³⁰ The first problematic predecessor is Leil, a man who loves peace and justice and builds the city of Kaerleil but grows weak and neglectful of his duties toward the end of his twenty-five-year reign; as a result, civil war breaks out (28.115–29.117). The second one is King Leir himself who divides his kingdom, punishes Cordeilla for her honesty, and creates the conditions under which his sons-in-law can rebel and strip him of power (31.163–89). It is then Cordeilla who solves the problems her father has caused. First she restores her father's dignity before introducing him to the French court, then she and her husband restore him to a power equivalent to what he had as king of Britain by giving him jurisdiction over France, and finally she goes with her father on his campaign to regain the British throne (31.237–54). Her accompanying Leir creates the possibility that she assists him in achieving his military victory over his sons-in-law. After she enables her father to reign a second time and use his royal power to restore proper social order among the Britons, Cordeilla proves herself to be a competent ruler (31.254–55). She presides over five years of peace and building projects, two markers of good kingship in Geoffrey's history (31.255–32.260). After the respite this female king provides, however, the reigns of her successors highlight the tendency of male kings

and king-candidates to fight civil wars: first, Cordeilla's nephews attack each other (32.270–82); then, Ferreux and Porrex do so, resulting in the deaths of both brothers (33.292–304); and finally, Belinus and Brennius fight a series of battles that put British sovereignty at risk (35.1–41.126). Without their mother Tonwenna's intervention, Belinus and Brennius would likely have continued to destabilize the realm.

Queen Marcia's reign establishes a standard for kingly excellence in the non-Arthurian portion of Geoffrey's history that few rulers match, but the deeds of both her productive predecessors and her problematic successors accentuate the superiority of this female king. King Belinus, after reconciling with his rebellious brother Brennius, restores and constructs buildings as well as brings justice to Britain, thereby initiating a sequence of positive events in Geoffrey's metanarrative of kingship (44.216–27). King Gurguint Barbruc then consolidates his predecessor's gains by resubjugating Denmark and ruling both wisely and with restraint (45.233–40). Next, Marcia's husband Guithelinus rules "*benigne et modeste [benevolently and with moderation],*" maintaining the peace that his predecessor had fought to achieve (47.257). When his untimely death leaves Britain in the capable hands of his wife Marcia, the entire island gains a leader whose outstanding capabilities make her worthy of reigning until her own death rather than until her son reaches his majority (47.264–66). Marcia's devising the law code that Alfred the Great later translated, along with her many other innovations, positions her above her predecessors in terms of both intelligence and cultural importance (47.258–61). However, the careers of her successors make it clear that she represents the pinnacle of good kingship.

After Marcia's reign, Geoffrey mentions three kings (Sisillius II, Kimarus, and Danius) without offering any characterization of them at all, thus making the female king's achievements all the more noteworthy (47.265–67). He then describes four bad kings whose alternation with moral and effective ones makes their failings conspicuous. The first of these bad kings is Morvidus, a tyrant whose bloodlust is insatiable. Although his good looks, physical strength, and generosity might have earned him a good reputation, cruelty is his defining characteristic (47.268–72). When Morvidus is angry and has a weapon, he is ready to kill anyone (47.269–70). More frighteningly, he is not satisfied with merely defeating his enemies; instead, he wishes to kill all of them himself. After defeating the king of the Flemings, Morvidus sets about killing each and every enemy warrior he has captured; then, when he is exhausted, he has the remaining men "*uiuos excoiari et excoiatis comburi [flayed and, once flayed, burned alive]*" (48.279–80). Geoffrey's comment that "*inter haec et alia saeuiciae suae gesta contigit ei infortunium quoddam*

quod nequitiam suam deleuit [among these and other barbarous deeds, a misfortune seized him that blotted out his former vileness]" marks this king's death as comeuppance (48.280–82). When a horribly ferocious beast begins to devour his people, the king decides to fight it alone; nevertheless, once Morvidus runs out of weaponry, the monster swallows him "uelut pisciculum [as he would a little fish]" (48.286). The model behavior of his successor Gorbonianus makes Morvidus's failings glaringly obvious: Gorbonianus protects the peasants from oppression, honors the gods by repairing and building temples, treats warriors generously, and acts in a spirit of justice and equity (49.287–97).

The problematic reigns of three additional successors likewise accentuate the fact that Marcia is a rarity in Geoffrey's history: a ruler who is both effective and moral. The first is Arthgallo, whose behavior is the opposite of his brother Gorbonianus's and who demonstrates the difference between a tyrant and a benevolent monarch by playing both roles. Because Arthgallo attempts to gain wealth by stealing it from noblemen and supplants nobles with non-nobles, he gets deposed (50.298–302). As a result, Arthgallo's brother Elidurus rules for five years, until he cedes the throne to an impoverished and contrite Arthgallo; Arthgallo then rules well for ten years, protecting noblemen's property until his death returns Elidurus to the throne (50.302–51.332). The second problematic king is Peredurus. He earns a great reputation by governing well: he "benigne postmodum et modeste gubernauit ita ut antecessores fratres excellere diceretur nec de Eliduro mentio fieret [ruled afterwards benignly and temperately so that he was said to excel his brothers who preceded him, and no mention was made of Elidurus]" (51.339–40). However, Peredurus's manner of acquiring the throne makes the rightful king's virtue more evident: Peredurus becomes king only after he and Iugenius imprison and seize the throne from their brother Elidurus (dividing the kingdom between them), and then Iugenius dies (51.334–37). As if to remind readers that ruling well does not excuse usurpation, death suddenly robs Peredurus of his life and then Elidurus rules until his own death, providing "exemplum pietatis successoribus suis [a model of goodness for his successors]" (51.340–44).

After the political confusion of Elidurus's three reigns, both Regin and Marganus rule as effectively as the other kings from their family (52.345–50), but then a third problematic king emerges. Enniaunus treats his subjects so poorly that he is deposed after six years in power (52.350–53). Geoffrey explains the cause and effect of the situation saying, "postposita namque iusticia, tyrannidem praelegerat, quae illum a solio regni deposuit [having neglected justice, he chose tyranny, which removed him from the throne of the realm]" (52.352–53). This king's

failings become all the more evident first when Geoffrey reports that Iduallo's knowledge of his predecessor's deposition causes him to restore "ius [justice]" and to maintain "rectitudinem [moral uprightness]" (52.354), and then when Geoffrey names twenty-nine kings whose positive traits suggest that all of them rule justly.²³¹ Within the context of both her predecessors and successors, Marcia emerges as one of the few excellent kings in Geoffrey's history and the only one with numerous intellectual achievements.

Neither Helena, daughter of Coel, nor Octavius's daughter gets the opportunity to reign as a female king, but together these king-candidates offer an implicit alternative to the political norm that surrounds them: rebellion, internecine strife, and violent transitions of power. They appear at a turning point in *The History of the Kings of Britain*: after a long period rife with bad behavior by males, but before the descent into political chaos from which Aurelius Ambrosius, Uther, and Arturus can rescue Britain only temporarily. The metanarrative of kingship in Geoffrey's history mainly concerns male misbehavior, particularly internecine warfare and the refusal to pay tribute to Rome. Although King Lud is a respected warrior and a generous host who repairs buildings and constructs new ones (53.368–75), his brother Cassibellaunus—despite his "largitate atque probitate [generosity and honesty]" (53.384) and valiant defense of the Britons' freedom by twice defeating Julius Caesar in battle (56.70–75, 60.124–61.137)—destroys his country's and his own autonomy by refusing to reconcile with his nephew, Duke Androgeus of Trinovantium (61.157–63). The king's unrelenting anger toward his own relative enables Julius Caesar to resubjugate Britain and reduce Cassibellaunus to begging Androgeus to reconcile him to Caesar before he becomes Caesar's prisoner (62.230–33). Then, in contrast to Tenuantius who rules with justice and Kimbelinus who pays tribute to the Romans "gratis [freely]" (64.271–75), Kimbelinus's successor Guider pays the ultimate price for his refusal to keep peace with Rome: Emperor Claudius invades Britain and tries to starve the residents of Porchester into submission, and Guider dies while attempting to rescue his people (65.280–66.297). Guider's brother Arviragus causes the Britons to suffer heavy casualties when, out of pride, he rebels against Rome (69.346–58). Without his wife Gewissa's intervention, it appears that the bloodletting would have continued, for "neuter potitus est uictoria [neither army could gain possession of victory]" (69.358).

The immediate context for the appearance of Helena and Octavius's daughter, however, is a group of murderous kings and would-be kings all struggling for power after the death of King Lucius, who (like his wise predecessors Marius and Coillus) maintains peace by paying the

tribute owed to Rome (70.388–91, 71.396–97, 72.400–402). After Lucius dies without an heir, the Roman king-candidate Severus attempts to bring Britain under Roman control. Nevertheless, in his battle against the Briton Fulgenius, both men die—leaving Severus's sons Geta and Bassianus as king-candidates (74.11–33). Then, when the Romans crown the Roman-blooded Geta king of Britain, the Britons select Bassianus because of his British blood; as a result, the brothers wage a civil war that results in Geta's death and Bassianus's accession to the throne (74.33–37). Bassianus, however, then loses the throne to Carausius, who first gains the Britons' support by promising to protect them from both Roman and barbarian forces, and then kills the king after getting the Picts to abandon Bassianus on the battlefield (75.51–60). Although the Romans then regain control of the island through sending the future King Allectus to kill Carausius, Allectus turns out to be horribly oppressive because he wishes to punish the Britons for supporting Carausius (76.63–68). After the Britons crown Asclepiodotus king, he manages to defeat and kill Allectus; nevertheless, this victory results in another high-casualty war with the Romans that Asclepiodotus wins with the aid of other British leaders (76.68–97). This king then reigns in peace until, ten years later, Coel leads another rebellion, and the crown becomes his (78.122–24).

Coel's daughter Helena, whom the king has educated so that she can reign "*facilius* [more easily]" after his death, embodies the possibility of a peaceful transition of power (78.141). This is a possibility that Geoffrey underscores by having Duke Caradocus of Cornwall assert that Helena possesses the kingdom of Britain "*hereditario iure* [by hereditary right]" (83.291–93). Nevertheless, Coel's sudden death enables the Roman senator Constantius to seize the British throne and legitimize his reign by marrying Helena (78.136–37). Later on, however, even Constantinus's strong-handed governing and conquest of Rome cannot prevent Duke Octavius of the Gewissei from rebelling and seizing the British throne (80.163–69). His action destabilizes Britain further, for King Octavius gains, loses, and then regains the throne (80.168–90). The appearance of Octavius's daughter offers another example of a potentially peaceful transition of power, but her father's choice not to support her as a king-candidate brings even greater political turmoil than Constantius's usurpation of Helena's rights caused. Given the descent into political chaos that follows the ignoring of the possibility of female rule, Norman readers of Geoffrey's history might have imagined how peaceful early Britain could have been if either Helena or Octavius's daughter had reigned.

Nevertheless, whether or not they imagined this particular possibility, these readers would have noticed the destructive consequences of ongoing battles for the throne. First, the arrogant King Maximianus attempts

to build an empire and gets murdered in Rome (84.306–88.410); next, Gratianus Municeps takes over but proves so tyrannical that the commoners kill him (89.1–3); then Constans, due to his training for monastic life rather than government, proves to be not only useless but also so “fundamentally unfit for rule” that “his weakness allows a tyrant to seize the crown” (95.166–69); and finally, Vortegirnus allows the Saxons to overrun Britain (101.384–89).²³² Although Arturus offers a respite from the mess that males tend to make of the acquisition and retention of political power, the pattern into which male kings fall is undeniable: “Quamquam enim multi principes eorum antiquam patrum dignitatem seruarent, plures tamen debiliores heredes succedebant, qui eam penitus inuadentibus hostibus amittebant [Although many of their rulers preserved the ancient greatness of their fathers, more of them nevertheless followed as weaker heirs]” (194.339–42). When King Salomon of Brittany—leader of the Britons who successfully defend their land from all enemies—condemns the vast majority of early British rulers, he encapsulates the critique of rule by males that Geoffrey’s metanarrative of kingship provides. King Salomon’s grief that he and his people share a common origin with these ignoble fellow Britons prepares for the nadir of early British history: the passage of dominion over the island from the Britons to the Saxons (194.342–44, 207.594–97). Given that the civil wars fought after the death of King Caduallo lead to that passage of dominion, Geoffrey’s positive presentation of female kings and use of female king-candidates as potential alternatives to the destructive norm of internecine warfare are worthy of both Norman and modern readers’ attention.

Because Geoffrey dedicates his history to the Norman noblemen with the power to facilitate the impending reign of Empress Matilda, the contrasts he creates—between often corrupt and ineffective male kings and moral and effective female ones, as well as between the hope that female king-candidates offer and the hopelessness that bad male kings and king-candidates cause—are potentially powerful means of preparing for her accession to the English throne. His completion of the history he called *Concerning the Deeds of the Britons* by the end of 1138 makes it likely that Geoffrey was preparing his Norman readers to welcome a female king, one who could save England from a morally questionable and sometimes tyrannical king, Stephen of Blois. As a resident of Oxford since 1129, Geoffrey would have been well aware of the competing claims to sovereignty of Empress Matilda and King Stephen. Furthermore, the survival of documentary evidence (in a calendar copy of a charter dated shortly after September 30, 1139) of Empress Matilda’s belief that she was the only legitimate heir to her father’s throne increases

the likelihood that Geoffrey knew of both this belief and the empress's desire to become king:

Matildis imperatrix etc. Sciatis quod quando in Angliam veni post mortem regis Henrici patris mei, Milo de Glocestria quam citius potuit venit ad me apud Bristolliam et recepit me ut dominam et sicut illam quam justam heredem regni Anglie recognovit, et inde me secum ad Glocestriam adduxit et ibi homagium suum mihi fecit ligie contra omnes homines.

[Empress Matilda et cetera. Let it be known by you that, when I arrived in England after the death of my father King Henry, Miles of Gloucester—as quickly as he was able—came to me at Bristol and received me as lady, and as she whom he recognized as the true heir of the kingdom of England, and from there he conducted me to (the city of) Gloucester, and there he paid me homage as my liege subject against all men].²³³

Although Geoffrey left behind no document stating what he believed about female rulers, he created a version of the early British past that assigns to female figures varied and meaningful roles, and that depicts female rulers as competent and morally upright. This act of creation constitutes a unique contribution to insular historiography whose most likely point of origin is the author's anticipation of Empress Matilda's reign as the first female king of England.

Geoffrey's creation of historical precedents for female kingship reinforces the message of his history of early Britain: support the legitimate ruler, male or female, or prepare to lose dominion over the island to foreign powers that are always ready to exploit the political vulnerability that civil war creates. Moreover, Geoffrey's female figures work with the example of Brutus at the beginning of his book and the examples of Aurelius, Uther, and Arturus in its Arthurian section to demonstrate that Galfridian historiography creates no neat dichotomy between what Cohen has described as the "'traditional' ('masculine') hero" who is "violent and aggressive" and a "'nontraditional' ('feminized') hero" who is "thoughtful and wily."²³⁴ Instead, there are male heroes who are both aggressive on the battlefield and caring with their loved ones and subjects, and there are female heroes who perform the functions of warrior and king—and do so better than the many immoral or foolish males who comprise the rulers of Britain. In addition, female figures affect the course of history whether they play the role of heroine, female hero, male hero, or a combination of roles. The way in which Geoffrey closes his narrative of the early British past provides further evidence that he consistently treats women as possessing historical agency.

As Geoffrey of Monmouth describes the supposed degeneration of the Britons into the race called the Welsh, he offers his readers three alternatives for how to interpret it. The name “Gualenses [Welsh]” could derive “a Gualone duce eorum [from their leader Gualo],” “a Galaes regina [from Queen Galaes],” or “a barbarie [from the barbarity/brutality]” of the Welsh (207.593–94). Although the slur against the Welsh as uncivilized tends to be the alternative on which scholars focus when trying to determine either Geoffrey’s attitude toward the Welsh or his ethnic identity, the other two alternatives offer a final example of this historian’s development of a female-inclusive and female-friendly version of the British past.²³⁵ Because Geoffrey does not comment upon the Gualo and Galaes alternatives, they offer themselves as equally viable. What makes the Galaes alternative worthy of extra attention, however, is that unlike the name Gualo—which appears only in the closing lines of Geoffrey’s history—the name Galaes has already appeared early on in his account. As Geoffrey discusses the reign of King Ebraucus (the father of twenty sons and thirty daughters), he describes Princess Galaes as “omnium pulcherrima quae tunc in Britannia siue in Gallia fuerant [the most beautiful of all the women who were then in Britain or Gaul]” and as resembling her sisters in having traveled to Italy to marry a Trojan nobleman (27.103–6). Given the two mentions of this name, there are two interpretive possibilities: either there are two female figures with the name Galaes, the first of whom marries a Trojan nobleman in order to perpetuate the Trojan bloodline and the second of whom is a noteworthy queen of the Welsh, or this daughter of Ebraucus was a founder or cofounder of the Welsh bloodline—a situation that would link the Welsh with the noble Trojan origins of the Britons.²³⁶

Through the last female figure he includes in his history, Geoffrey offers his readers a final example of his historiographical method: to include females meaningfully, and to treat female participation in historical events as normative. He also offers two ways of interpreting what the word ‘Welsh’ means: it encodes either the negative aspects of the Britons’ behavior (fighting among themselves as well as against the Saxons) or the former glory of the Welsh as embodied in a leader—whether male (Gualo) or female (Galaes). Lesley Johnson helps readers to appreciate the significance of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Galaes, explaining that she provides a precedent within “traditions of insular historiography” for female figures to function as “protagonists in a narrative concerned with the origins of communities and their names.”²³⁷ Johnson notes that *The History of the Kings of Britain* includes Galaes without presenting her in “a negative or transgressive light,” an act of matter-of-fact inclusion that contrasts sharply with *Des grantz geanz*’s inclusion of evil, transgressive females

who participate in the legendary founding of Albion; these evil females are a group of sisters whose attempted murder of their husbands results in their being exiled, and who then copulate with “incubi [devils]” to satisfy their sexual desires.²³⁸ Compared to the misogynist foundation myth that later becomes attached to Albion, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s version of the origin of the Welsh—like his version of the founding of Britain—is strikingly feminist. Furthermore, Geoffrey’s creation of a female point of origin for Welsh identity is entirely consistent with the freedom he gives to both male and female figures to escape the restrictions of traditional gender roles. This flexible conception of gender roles makes Geoffrey of Monmouth a feminist historian of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERMINING AND DEGRADING FEMALE KINGSHIP IN THE FIRST VARIANT AND WACE'S *ROMAN DE BRUT*

Although Geoffrey of Monmouth's meaningful inclusion of female figures in his account of the early British past is evident to readers of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the uniqueness of his approach to historiography becomes fully apparent only when readers compare his book (commonly referred to as the Vulgate version) to the texts that his first redactor and first translator produced, for both the First Variant and Wace's *roman de Brut* significantly alter the Galfridian account.¹ The First Variant version of Geoffrey's history is a redaction produced before Geoffrey's death, while the *roman de Brut* is an Anglo-Norman translation of the history completed by Wace during the year in which Geoffrey is said to have died (1155)—a translation which draws upon both the Vulgate and the First Variant versions of *The History of the Kings of Britain*.²

One means of accounting for the alterations that the Variant-redactor and Wace make to the non-Arthurian portion of their Galfridian source(s) is to distinguish between two different types of medieval *clerici*. Some of the men literate in Latin in the twelfth century were members of the secular portion of the clergy; others belonged to religious orders and possessed ranks within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.³ As discussed in the previous chapter, Geoffrey of Monmouth was a secular clerk who functioned as a teacher within the academic community at Oxford and, in 1152, became Bishop of Saint Asaph within days of receiving ordination. Therefore, he became a member of the church hierarchy very late in his life and likely for political rather than spiritual reasons: because the writing of his history had earned him favor among the most powerful Norman aristocrats and/or because such a reward provided a powerful

incentive for Geoffrey to support the future King Henry II. The lack of surviving evidence that Geoffrey ever visited his bishopric, let alone resided or performed any pastoral function there, suggests that Geoffrey remained a man of the secular world until his death. Both the first redactor and the first translator of Geoffrey's history, in contrast, belong to the category of ecclesiastical clerks. Although ecclesiastical clerks are not necessarily more conservative in their views than secular ones, the available evidence supports the conclusion that both the Variant-redactor and Wace were traditionalistic ecclesiastics.

This chapter, by linking extant information about these two men to their respective translations of Galfridian females, offers comparative analysis that reveals how both the redactor and the translator systematically substitute misogynist and ecclesiastical values for Geoffrey of Monmouth's feminist and secular ones. This process of substitution causes both the First Variant and the *roman de Brut* to reinforce traditional ideas about gender roles. If readers recall two common meanings of the verb 'translate,' then they will identify both the Variant-redactor and Wace as translators: both men relocate female figures within the historiographical landscape through the linguistic transformation of a source text—the former into abbreviated, ecclesiasticized Latin prose and the latter into Anglo-Norman verse.⁴ Nevertheless, because the First Variant prepares the way for Wace's *roman de Brut* to depart more drastically from Galfridian historiography, these two texts represent two related yet separate stages of the undermining of Galfridian historiography: first the Variant version undermines the concept of female kingship as well as the positive presentation of female figures that makes female kingship so attractive in the Galfridian account of the British past; then the *roman de Brut*, despite expanding rather than abbreviating this account, transforms it in similar but more profound ways.

The Variant-Redactor's Ecclesiasticization of a Secular, Feminist Text

The history to which Geoffrey of Monmouth referred as *De gestis Britonum* survives in three versions: the original Vulgate version preserved in over two hundred manuscripts, about a third of which were produced before the end of the twelfth century; a First Variant version that Neil Wright has edited based on eight manuscripts; and a Second Variant version that survives in eighteen manuscripts but does not substantially revise the Vulgate version.⁵ Wright's analysis of the manuscript evidence indicates that the First Variant, written before Geoffrey's death in 1155, never threatened the popularity of the Vulgate version and that "by the

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the First Variant had, although it was still copied, become something of a poor relation of the vulgate *Historia*.⁶ The identity of the redactor of the First Variant remains unknown; nevertheless, whoever it was, it was not Geoffrey of Monmouth. According to both Wright and recent editor of the Vulgate text Michael D. Reeve, comparative analysis of the First Variant with its source reveals that the Variant version “recasts the text far too much to be read as anything but an adaptation.”⁷ Produced sometime between 1138 and the early 1150s, the First Variant is a condensed version of Geoffrey’s history that systematically excises the passages in which Geoffrey interrupts the flow of his narrative to speak directly to readers: the author’s dedication of the whole book to either one or two Norman magnates (*HRB* 1.1–3.23) and the *Prophetiae Merlini* section to Bishop Alexander of Lincoln (109.1–110.24); his statements of authorial intent, diatribe about civil war, and personal comments (70.386–88, 91.55–75, 175.448–52, 177.1–5, 186.154–57, 208.601–7); and “some of the more rhetorical and emotionally charged passages in the vulgate.”⁸ Essentially, the redactor removes most of the passages in which Geoffrey expresses his personal values.

In his edition of the First Variant, Wright notes how the Variant-redactor resists Geoffrey’s historiographical agenda by making an effort “to reconcile the Galfridian version of events with...more orthodox historical authorities” such as Bede, as well as by displaying a “fondness for biblical allusion” that creates “a tone rather more moral than that of Geoffrey’s original.”⁹ These editorial choices reveal the Variant-redactor to be someone who “recasts the *Historia* freely in a manner quite different from that of Geoffrey himself.”¹⁰ More specifically, the Variant-redactor’s use of Bede—the very historian whose account of the past Geoffrey’s history had challenged and displaced—marks the redactor as someone whose historiographical orientation, unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth’s, is pro-English in addition to being pro-Welsh.¹¹ Furthermore, Wright’s analysis of the Variant-redactor’s Latin prose indicates that this (presumably male) redactor cannot be Geoffrey himself: “The Latin vocabulary of the Variant version bears the stamp of a mind other than Geoffrey’s. These differences of style and expression, the greater repetitiousness of the Variant text, and its preference for non-Galfridian vocabulary, coupled with its independent Classical and biblical allusions...in effect preclude Geoffrey’s authorship of the Variant version.”¹² Given the Variant-redactor’s tendency to moralize and insert biblical allusions as well as his attempt to reconcile Galfridian with Bedan historiography, he was probably either a monk or a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹³ Although his revision of Geoffrey’s text is only partial, it has palpable consequences: it decreases the narrative or historical significance of

all but one of Geoffrey's good female figures while villainizing the female figures that commit moral wrongs, regardless of their individual circumstances.

In the Variant version of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Lavinia gains but Innogin loses narrative significance. The Variant-redactor preserves Lavinia's role in transferring possession of Italy from her father Latinus to her husband Eneas, and he increases her narrative significance by adding the etymology of the city name Lavinium (*HRB* 6.51–52; *FV* 6.4–6). However, he strips Innogin of her narrative significance by making her merely a means of transferring property. As noted in chapter 2, Geoffrey gives Innogin a dramatic and powerful role when her sorrow at losing her homeland overwhelms her: "At Innogin, in excelsa puppi stans, saepius inter brachia Bruti in extasi collabitur; fuis quoque cum singultu lacrimis, parentes ac patriam deserere conqueritur, nec oculos a litore auertit dum litora oculis patuerunt [But Innogin, standing on the highest deck, very frequently fell in a swoon—into the arms of Brutus. With tears pouring out with each sob, she also bewailed leaving her parents and her homeland. She did not turn her eyes from the shore while the shore spread before her eyes]" (*HRB* 15.270–73). In Geoffrey's account, Innogin's suffering causes Brutus to react with gentle words, embraces, and kisses; this reaction gives his heroism the 'feminine' dimension of tenderness (*HRB* 15.273–75). The Variant version, however, compresses the Vulgate account of the marriage. This compression reduces the marriage to a business transaction: "Filia Bruto maritatur; quisque prout dignitas expetebat auro et argento donatur et peractis cunctis erectis uelis secundis uentis abscedunt [The daughter was married to Brutus: everything was given, just as his worth demanded, with gold and silver; and, with all the sails having been completely raised, they left with favorable winds]" (*FV* 15.16–18). The redaction makes Innogin perfunctory by replacing a description of the beginning of a caring marital relationship with a description of a business arrangement.¹⁴ The Variant version of events focuses on the goods the worthy Brutus receives as well as the weather conditions as he departs with his new possessions, his wife being one of them. After the redactor redefines Geoffrey's Innogin as an item of property in a transaction between males, he notes without comment that she fulfills her main function as a queen consort by producing three sons (*HRB* 23.1–2; *FV* 23.1–2). Innogin has, therefore, lost her narrative significance.

The Variant-redactor's treatment of Tonwenna leaves her actions unchanged, but his omissions cause his version of the character to lack the emotional intensity and, as a result, to lack the narrative significance of her Galfridian counterpart. Despite the similarity of the Vulgate

and Variant accounts of Tonwenna's intervention to end the civil war between Belinus and Brennius, the Variant account omits two elements present in the Vulgate one (*HRB* 41.126–54; *FV* 41.5–32). One omission is Tonwenna's statement to Brennius that "Nullam enim aduersus eum habere debes, qui tibi nullam contumeliam intulerit [You certainly ought to have no (anger) against him, who inflicted on you no insult]" (*HRB* 41.137–38). This omission results in the Variant Tonwenna simply ordering Brennius to "compesce [curb]" his anger against his brother because she has endured a mother's worries (*FV* 41.13–15). In the absence of the Vulgate Tonwenna's stern chastising of her son, the revised version of this character lacks the emotional intensity that makes this mother a significant figure in Geoffrey's history.

The other omission, however, robs Tonwenna's speech of the intensity that it possesses in the Vulgate version due to her impassioned description of all she suffered as a laboring mother. The Vulgate queen, having bared her bosom, reminds Brennius of the breasts that nursed him and of the womb "unde te in mundum produxit angustiis mea uiscera cruciantibus [from which he (the creator) brought him forth into the world while (her) internal organs suffered dangerous agonies]," but her Variant counterpart does not (*HRB* 41.134–35; *FV* 15–25). Together these omissions decrease Tonwenna's narrative significance by making her a less passionate and less engaging character. Moreover, the second omission could indicate either the redactor's lack of interest in women's experiences such as childbirth, or a more general discomfort—whether with the female body or with what he might have perceived as feminine emotionalism. Both of these reactions are ones that life as a monk or ecclesiastic would have encouraged. Whatever the Variant-redactor's reasons for editing Tonwenna's story as he did, his Tonwenna can no longer stir readers' sympathy to the same degree as her Vulgate counterpart. Nevertheless, Tonwenna is not the only prominent female figure to lose narrative significance in the First Variant version of Geoffrey's history.

The Variant-redactor displays a bias in favor of male figures in other stories in which he decreases the narrative significance of females, whether or not the female roles change substantially. For example, in the case of Merlinus's mother, the redactor leaves her role unchanged, but he gives her less narrative significance than her Vulgate counterpart possesses. The Variant version condenses her speech about Merlinus's conception from ninety-nine to eighty-one words while maintaining the full length of the speech of Vortegirnus's advisor Maugantius (*HRB* 107.531–40; *FV* 107.6–14). In this way, the Variant-redactor causes Merlinus's mother to lose narrative ground to a male character.

In the case of Brianus's sister, however, the Variant-redactor goes beyond modifications in prose style and word choice, for he changes the nature of this female character by compressing the story in ways that destroy her heroism.¹⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of the story of Brianus's sister includes three key elements: she gives her brother the information he needs to assassinate the magician who is revealing King Caduallo's military attacks to his enemy, plans to meet her brother outside the city where he will await her, and then fails to escape her captor despite making several attempts (*HRB* 196.398–411). In contrast, the Variant redaction omits any mention of either the plan for the siblings to meet or the attempts of Brianus's sister to take on the function of a male hero by rescuing herself (*FV* 196.20–27). Consequently, the focus of the revised story becomes Brianus's mission rather than the relationship between brother and sister, and Brianus's sister becomes a different type of character. Although she remains a supplier of information, that role does not receive enough attention in the Variant version for her to fit Maureen Fries's definition of a female hero, and the failure of Brianus's sister to take any action to escape costs her the potential label of hero in the traditional, male sense (*HRB* 196.398–401; *FV* 196.20–23). Her primary role, therefore, becomes that of heroine: she is a captive who is serving the queen (*HRB* 196.391–94; *FV* 196.12–16). In the Variant version of Geoffrey's history, Brianus's sister loses her narrative significance because both her brother and the redactor as narrator give her much less attention than she receives from the Galfridian Brianus and Geoffrey as narrator. As a result, a heroic female character becomes a mere plot function.

The Variant-redactor's revision of Gewissa's story decreases her historical significance through compression that shifts the focus onto the commercial aspect of her marriage and a male origin for the name of the city of Gloucester. Geoffrey of Monmouth presents Gewissa's beauty as both a source of wonder for all who see her and the only source of King Arviragus's inspiration to build the city: she has "tanto feruore amoris succendit regem ita ut ipsam solam cunctis rebus praeferret [inflamed the king with such a great passionate desire that he prefer(s) her alone to all things]" (*HRB* 68.330–31). Geoffrey then states that Arviragus suggests to his father-in-law Emperor Claudius that they build the city of Gloucester in order to honor Gewissa through honoring the place where Arviragus married her (*HRB* 68.332). In contrast to Geoffrey, the Variant-redactor presents Gewissa's body as part of a business transaction between her father and husband, replacing the romantic inspiration for city-building with the businesslike phrase "Aruirago nuptiali copulata thoro [with her having been joined to Arviragus through the marriage

bed]” (*FV* 68.4–5). Furthermore, the Variant-redactor emphasizes the political motivation for the marriage by linking its celebration with the recognition of a border: “Celebrarunt nuptias iuxta Sabrinum fluuium in confinio Demecie et Loegrie [They celebrated the wedding by the side of the river Severn, on the border between Demetia and Loegria]” (*FV* 68.5–6).¹⁶ The redactor then creates textual ambiguity by rendering Geoffrey’s phrase, “Locum quo ei primo nupserat celebrem esse uolens [Wishing that the place where he had first married her be honored],” as “Locum eundem celebrem post se esse cupiens [Desiring that same place be celebrated after himself/themselves]” (*HRB* 68.331–32; *FV* 68.6–7). In the Variant version, therefore, it is no longer clear why Arviragus wants this place to be remembered. Does the king attach significance to it primarily because of the wedding that happened there, or because of the political transaction achieved through that wedding? Moreover, given that the reflexive *se* could be either singular or plural, does the future moment referred to in this phrase occur after one person (presumably King Arviragus) has passed away, after Claudius and Arviragus have passed away, or after the two men and Gewissa have passed away? Whatever his intended referent, however, the Variant-redactor’s revisions cause Gewissa to recede into the background and Arviragus and Claudius to move into the foreground of the story.

This shift in narrative focus becomes evident when the redactor not only preserves the alternate etymologies of the name ‘Gloucester’ but also alters the spelling of the city’s name in this passage from “Gloucestria” to “Claudiocestria,” a spelling that appears elsewhere in Geoffrey’s history (*HRB* 68.335, 69.370; *FV* 68.8). By making this seemingly minor change, the redactor brings Claudius’s name to the fore and thus suggests that Claudius’s begetting of his son Gloius is more important than Arviragus’s love for and honoring of Gewissa. The Variant-redactor’s version definitely favors the male origin of the city’s name, causing male figures to overshadow the female one. When the Variant-redactor presents Geoffrey of Monmouth’s two potential female kings, Helena the daughter of Coel and Octavius’s daughter, he decreases their historical significance in a similar manner.

The Variant Helena has less historical significance than her Galfridian counterpart because the Variant-redactor credits Helena with less impressive attributes than she possesses in the Vulgate text, and he raises questions about her suitability for rule, her intellectual capabilities, and her father’s judgment in deciding to prepare his daughter for kingship. Whereas Geoffrey says of Helena that “pulcritudo eius prouinciales puellas superabat, nec uspiam reperiebatur altera quae in musicis instrumentis siue in liberalibus artibus doctior illa censeretur [she was more beautiful

that any young woman in the country, and she was considered to have no equal in playing musical instruments or (a peer) more learned in the liberal arts],” the Variant-redactor makes more modest claims regarding her attributes and capabilities (*HRB* 78.138–40). He says that she was “pulcrum ualde ac formosam [very pretty, and with a fine appearance]”—phrasing that not only focuses on her looks but also makes her seem rather ordinary—and then adds a scaled-back version of Geoffrey’s description of her education: “Artibusque liberalibus edoctam [And she was learned in the liberal arts]” (*FV* 78.16–17). Furthermore, the Variant-redactor revises Geoffrey’s assertion that, because Coel “caruerat...alia sobole quae solio regni potiretur [lacked...any other offspring who could inherit the throne of the kingdom],” he had given his daughter a king’s education (*HRB* 78.140–42). By bluntly stating that “nec erat regi Cohel filius [there was no son of King Coel],” the Variant-redactor focuses more squarely than Geoffrey on the lack of a male king-candidate (*FV* 78.17). In this way, he emphasizes the norm of male primogeniture and raises questions about the suitability of this female king-candidate.

The redactor also alters Geoffrey’s statement that “unde eam ita docere laborauerat ut regimen patriae post obitum suum facilius tractare quiuisset [her father had taken pains to educate her in such a way that she could rule the country more easily when he died]”; consequently, the claim becomes “patri cara extiterat ut artibus omnibus inbui eam faceret quo facilius et sapiencius post illum regnum regere nosset [the father had stood out in his efforts that she be given *initial* instruction in all arts so that she *might be able* to rule the realm more easily and more wisely after him]” (*HRB* 78.140–42; *FV* 78.18–19, my emphasis). Because this rephrasing attributes to Helena only a basic education, “*initial* instruction in all arts,” readers will construe her as less impressive than her Vulgate counterpart and wonder whether she possesses the intellectual capabilities to obtain a complete education. In addition, the phrase “the father had stood out in his efforts” makes King Coel seem unusual—and perhaps odd—for wanting to educate his daughter, thereby raising questions about his decision to prepare his daughter to be king. Moreover, the unusual nature of Coel’s decision positions his daughter as a rare exception to the rule of male-only succession. The phrase “might be able to rule the realm...more wisely” undermines Helena in a similar manner by raising other questions: how wise is Helena by nature? And how educable is she? The redactor’s compression of Chapter 83 erodes this female king-candidate’s position further, for it results in the omission of Geoffrey’s second assertion of Helena’s hereditary right to the British throne (*HRB* 83.291–93; *FV* 83.1–2). The Variant-redactor, therefore, lessens the historical

significance of Geoffrey's Helena by undermining her credibility as a female king-candidate.

In the Vulgate text, Octavius's daughter occupies a pivotal position in relation to succession to the British throne, but in Variant version she loses most of her historical significance. The Variant-redactor's initial description of Octavius's daughter reveals his awareness of two of Geoffrey of Monmouth's themes in *The History of the Kings of Britain*: that peace is precious because civil war is destructive, and that British history offers examples of female heirs to the British throne: "Denique senio confectus Octavius cogitavit de regno disponere qualiter post mortem suam pace hereditaria frueretur. Neque enim erat ei filius, sed unam tantum filiam habens optabat eam post se in regni solio sublimari [Finally, thoroughly defeated by old age, Octavius considered in what way to dispose of his kingdom after his death so that it might enjoy peaceful succession. Indeed he had no son, but, having only one daughter, he chose that she would be raised to the throne of the kingdom after him]" (*FV* 81.1–4). However, despite his more direct articulation of both the need for peaceful succession and the fact that Octavius's daughter is the only possible heir to the British throne, the Variant-redactor truncates Geoffrey's story so greatly that Maximianus (a male king-candidate) displaces his female competitor with a swiftness and ease that make his accession seem not just inevitable but natural.¹⁷ While Geoffrey's version of events elaborates on the struggle to become the heir to Octavius's throne in three substantial chapters (*HRB* 81.194–83.293), the Variant's version of events streamlines the plot to focus on Maximianus's succession. Because the redactor omits not only Geoffrey's description of the messenger Mauricus but also Mauricus's lengthy restatement of how marriage to Octavius's daughter could make Maximianus a great king, the issue that Geoffrey strongly emphasizes—claiming the British throne through a legitimate female heir—disappears in the Variant version (*HRB* 81.212–15, 81.220–31).

In addition, the Variant Maximianus gains power without delay, for the redactor also omits the Vulgate account of Maximianus's struggle to position himself as heir—along with a second restatement (this time by Geoffrey as narrator) of how pivotal Octavius's daughter is in establishing her husband's right to rule.¹⁸ The Variant version's swift narrative movement gives readers the impression that Maximianus's accession to the throne is natural, an impression the redactor confirms by rewording the moment at which Maximianus becomes king. Whereas the Vulgate states, "Cumque haec retulisset Caradocus, adqueiuit ei Octavius communique assensu illato regnum Britanniae cum filia sua illi donauit [And when Caradocus had reported these things, Octavius assented to what he said and, with the urging of public approval, he gave the kingdom of Britain

and his daughter to him]" (*HRB* 83.294–95), the Variant version nearly elides the female king-candidate: "Rex igitur Octavius cum honore summo suscipiens Maximianum dedit ei filiam suam et heredem regni constituit [Then King Octavius, accepting Maximianus with the greatest honor, gave to him his daughter and established him as the heir of the kingdom]" (*FV* 83.1–2). Thus, the redactor pushes Octavius's daughter into the margins of history.

The Variant-redactor's compression of the stories of Marcia and Cordeilla—both of whom function as female kings in the Vulgate version—greatly decreases the historical significance of their respective roles. In the case of Marcia, the redactor's compression eliminates two key elements of the Galfridian character: Marcia's governing all of Britain because of her "consilio [wisdom]" and "sensu [moral sense]," and her reigning until her death rather than until her son reaches his majority (*HRB* 47.264–66; *FV* 47.6–9). When describing Marcia's governing of Britain, the Variant-redactor carefully defines it as regency: "Mortuo autem Guizelino gubernaculum regni predictae regine remansit. Erat enim ei filius. vii. annorum Sisillius nomine cuius etas nondum apta erat regimini. Sed postquam adoleuit in uirum dyademate regni potitus est [However, with the death of Guizelinus, the government of the kingdom continued through the aforementioned queen. For her son named Sisillius was seven years old, whose age was not yet sufficient for ruling. But, after he reached manhood, he gained possession of the crown of the kingdom]" (*FV* 47.6–9). The effect of these changes to the Vulgate story is that Marcia loses most of her historical significance: she is no longer marked as worthy to rule based on her personal qualities and, because she does not rule until her death, becomes a mere regent.

Perhaps because Cordeilla's reign constitutes the most powerful model of female kingship in Geoffrey's history, the Variant-redactor chooses to significantly compress and reword her story.¹⁹ As a result, he transfers much of her historical significance to her husband Aganippus and presents female rule as inappropriate. Although the Variant-redactor compresses both Geoffrey's narration and the characters' speeches in the plot sequence that concerns the reigns of Leir and his daughter, it is noteworthy that he reduces the Vulgate account of Cordeilla's reign from sixteen to eleven lines (*HRB* 31.255–32.270; *FV* 31.97–32.6). This compression, in combination with other revisions, denies Cordeilla historical agency by underscoring her status as the wife of King Aganippus. One such revision is the Variant-redactor's elimination of Geoffrey's references both to the "regnum...cum omni auro et argento [realm...with all of its gold and silver]" that Leir gives to Cordeilla's sisters and to the "terra et pecunia [land and money]" he refuses to give to Cordeilla when she marries

(*HRB* 31.179–80). In contrast to Geoffrey, the Variant-redactor states simply that Leir divides the “regnum [realm]” between Gonorilla and Regau and says that Leir will give Cordeilla in marriage “sine dote [without dowry]” (*FV* 31.36–37), a remark which underscores her status as a wife rather than as a potential king. These revisions not only eliminate mention of the vast wealth that raises the status of Leir’s elder daughters but also decrease Cordeilla’s significance in relation to her sisters. Consequently, the redactor can make Aganippus the primary basis of Cordeilla’s identity.

By separating two events that in the Vulgate account occur at the same time, the deaths of King Leir and King Aganippus, the Variant-redactor raises doubts about whether Cordeilla reigns in her own right. In Geoffrey’s account, after Leir regains the throne, “in tercio anno mortuus est. Mortuus est etiam Aganippus rex Francorum. Cordeilla ergo filia, regni gubernaculum adepta [in the third year Leir died. Aganippus, king of the French, also died. Therefore, the daughter Cordeilla gained possession of the government of the realm]” (*HRB* 31.254–56). In this passage, Geoffrey states unequivocally that Cordeilla rules alone as the widowed daughter of King Leir, thereby likening her situation to what Empress Matilda’s would have been had she not married Geoffrey of Anjou. The Variant-redactor, in contrast, postpones announcing Aganippus’s death—an editorial choice with profound consequences. In the redactor’s version, “defuncto autem eo in senectute bona suscepit Cordeilla regni gubernacula [however, with (Leir’s) death in good old age, Cordeilla accepted the governance of the realm]” (*FV* 31.97–98). Nevertheless, it is only after the Variant-redactor describes Cordeilla’s honorable burial of her father that he mentions Aganippus’s death, and does so in a separate chapter (*FV* 32.1). As a result, the redactor leaves open the question of whether Aganippus and Cordeilla reign jointly while the French king lives, thus decreasing her historical significance.

Additional modifications that the redactor makes not only deny Cordeilla a good name but also undermine the concept of female kingship in two ways: they present her nephews’ rebellion as acceptable, and they make her loss of power seem inevitable. Cordeilla’s reputation suffers when the Variant-redactor modifies Geoffrey’s neutral description of the underground chamber of Janus, where Leicester’s builders initiate their projects and Cordeilla buries her father, so that it takes on an aura of evil. Geoffrey’s account makes her both a positive and potentially powerful figure: Cordeilla behaves properly by giving her father an appropriate burial in the chamber he had commanded to be built, while the mention of Janus (the Roman god of beginnings and endings) draws attention to the end of Leir’s reign and the beginning of Cordeilla’s (*HRB* 31.256–59).

Furthermore, even if readers interpret Geoffrey's reference to Janus (the god with two faces) as symbolizing Leir's two reigns rather than the reigns of Leir and his daughter, the Vulgate account associates Cordeilla neither with idolatry nor with any other moral fault and presents her actions as the means by which her elderly father regains power. The Variant account, in contrast, makes Cordeilla a negative figure by associating her with idolatrous rites. The burial chamber becomes a place "ubi gens ydolatrie data totius anni opera in sollempnitate eiusdem dei auspicabantur [where people of idolatry entered upon works granted for the whole year in celebration of this god]" (*FV* 31.101–2).

Although the Variant-redactor then goes on to report Aganippus's death and Cordeilla's peaceful five-year reign, his version of events differs from Geoffrey's in other ways that undermine the concept of female kingship by suggesting its impracticability. First, by compressing several events into one sentence (Aganippus's death, Cordeilla's peaceful reign, and her nephews' rebellion), the redactor gives readers the impression that it is because of her husband's death that Cordeilla is unable to retain control of the realm (*FV* 32.1–4). Second, the redactor's account emphasizes her nephews' takeover rather than Cordeilla's reign as a female king. Third, and most importantly, the redactor's rephrasing causes the nephews to become worthy adversaries rather than uncivilized usurpers:

Mortuo quoque Aganippo rege Cordeilla regnum Britannie per quinquennium in pace bona rexit donec a filiis sororum suarum inquietata, Margano uidelicet et Cunedagio—hiis enim nominibus insigniti erant—post multa prelia commissa ad ultimum deuicta ab eis et capta miserias carceris sortita est; ubi ob amissionem regni dolore obducta sese interemit. (*FV* 32.1–6)

[Also, with the death of Aganippus, Cordeilla ruled the realm of Britain in good peace for five years until it was disturbed by the sons of her sisters, Marganus and of course Cunedagius—whose names were indeed distinguished—(and) she, after having fought many battles, in the end was conquered by them and, having been captured, was fated to suffer the miseries of prison where, on account of being swallowed up by her sorrow at the loss of her realm, she killed herself.]

This rephrasing of the Vulgate account encourages readers to view the nephews' rebellion as acceptable, for they are "distinguished" men, and Cordeilla's loss of power as inevitable. Because Geoffrey's statement about the end of this female king's reign—"eam quoque ad ultimum captam in carcerem posuerunt [also they put her, finally captured, in prison]" (*HRB* 32.268–69)—becomes "capta miserias carceris sortita est [having been captured, she was fated to suffer the miseries of prison]" (*FV* 32.5),

readers of the Variant version will probably conclude that Cordeilla's deposition is the unavoidable result of female rule.

More specifically, the word choice in the Variant version transforms what in Geoffrey's account is unnatural and savage behavior on the part of the nephews into a less violent, and apparently appropriate, reaction to female power that brings about the inevitable: her defeat and deposition. Geoffrey's word choice defines the nephews' rebellion against their female king as an uncivilized act, one which both contrasts with their good reputations up to that point and harms the entire realm. He describes how the two men "*coeperunt eam inquietare* [began to attack her]" (*HRB* 32.260–61) and contrasts the fact that "*ambo iuuenes praeclarae probitatis famam habebant* [both young men had a reputation for distinguished goodness]" (32.262–63) with their savage behavior after inheriting their fathers' dukedoms: "*Hi itaque, cum post obitum patrum in ducatus eisdem successissent, indignati sunt Britanniam femineae potestati subditam esse. Collectis ergo exercitibus, in reginam insurrexerunt nec saeuiciae suae desistere uoluerunt donec quibusque prouinciis uastatis proelia cum ipsa commiserunt* [And so when, after the deaths of their fathers, they had succeeded to their office, they were indignant that Britain should be subject to the rule of a woman. Therefore, having gathered armies, they rebelled against the queen and were unwilling to put an end to their barbarity until they had destroyed every one of her provinces and had engaged with her in battle]" (32.264–68).

In contrast, the Variant-redactor's wording repositions Cordeilla's nephews so that their motives, their actions, and the consequences of those actions become acceptable and possibly inevitable. Unlike Geoffrey who labels as "*saeuiciae* [barbarity]" (*HRB* 32.267) the motive of rebelling against the king because she is female, the Variant-redactor neither articulates the issue of female rule nor labels the rebellion as a terrible crime. Instead, he refers to the nephews' "*inquietata* [disturbing]" the "*pace bona* [good peace]" Cordeilla has brought (*FV* 32.2–3) and, through his omission of the verb *insurrexerunt* 'they rebelled' (*HRB* 32.267), decriminalizes the action Geoffrey calls open rebellion. Furthermore, by not charging the nephews with devastating Cordeilla's entire kingdom, the redactor makes the consequences of their rebellion less violent and therefore less problematic. Finally, by referring to the nephews as those "*hiis enim nominibus insigniti erant* [whose names were indeed distinguished]" after he mentions their disturbing the peace (*FV* 32.3–4), the redactor makes their behavior appear acceptable. Their overthrow of Cordeilla does not damage their good reputations. The compression of the narration also causes the fact of the nephews' good names to preface a series of events that then flow together as if they are inevitable: Cordeilla's

fighting many battles, finally losing to her nephews, and suffering captivity (*FV* 32.3–5). The redactor's conclusion that Cordeilla "miseries carceris sortita est [having been captured, was fated to suffer the miseries of prison]" gives her loss of power an air of inevitability, even naturalness (*FV* 32.5). The end result of these revisions is that Cordeilla's suicide in the Variant version of events has an entirely different meaning than it has in its Vulgate context, despite its nearly identical phrasing in the redaction. In its Vulgate context, Cordeilla's suicide is a tragedy for both the female king and for Britain. In its Variant context, it is an inevitable result of her husband's early death and her nephews' strength and worthiness. Because of this shift in meaning in the redaction, Geoffrey's Cordeilla becomes a nonentity whose male relatives sweep her aside as they pursue their "distinguished" careers. For the Variant-redactor, female kingship is an impossibility.

Given the Variant-redactor's general tendency to moralize, it is not surprising that he retains or emphasizes the negative traits of those rare female figures in Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* that commit moral wrongs. Geoffrey's account of the reign of Guendoloena remains substantially unchanged in the Variant version (*HRB* 25.52–68; *FV* 25.1–15). For example, the Variant-redactor preserves the Vulgate's reference to Guendoloena's "paterna insania furens [raging with her father's extravagance/frenzy/madness]," thus retaining the one relatively negative trait (although how negative depends on how one translates *insania*) of the first female king in Geoffrey's history (*HRB* 25.58; *FV* 25.7). Nevertheless, Guendoloena's extravagant anger will seem more negative to readers of the Variant version than to those of the Vulgate version if Variant readers associate her with the redactor's blameworthy Iudon and seductive Ronwen.

The Variant-redactor does not change the core elements in the story of Iudon, who murders her son Porrex with the aid of some female servants: Iudon's anger at Porrex's killing of Ferreux still has the same immediate result (she and her servants tear Porrex to pieces) and indirect result (Porrex's death leads to civil strife) (*HRB* 33.298–304; *FV* 33.12–18). However, the Variant-redactor compresses the account in ways that are likely to cause his readers to view Iudon more negatively than readers of the Vulgate will view her. As noted in chapter 2, Geoffrey is careful to explain Iudon's behavior and offer a potential excuse for it in the form of what today's readers would call temporary insanity: passionate anger at the death of Ferreux makes her action understandable, as does the verb *uersa est* 'she was transformed' whose meaning suggests that Iudon is not her true self when she commits murder (*HRB* 33.298–301). The separate sentence stating that Iudon loved Ferreux more than Porrex then explains

her behavior further (*HRB* 33.299–300). The Variant version, in contrast, compresses the story, producing a concomitant shift in emphasis: the single sentence expressing both Iudon's hatred of Porrex, motivated by the fratricide, and her greater love for Ferreux shifts the emphasis from explaining and potentially excusing her action to the basic fact of her "odium et iram [hatred and anger]" (*FV* 33.13). As a result of this compression, the slightly reworded account of Iudon's dismemberment of her son is likely to affect readers more negatively than it does in the Vulgate (*HRB* 33.301–4; *FV* 33.14–18).²⁰ By condensing Geoffrey's description of Iudon, the Variant-redactor makes the murder itself and the subsequent civil war the focus of the story; consequently, the narrative emphasis shifts from the emotional causes of Iudon's action to the violent action itself. This shift encourages readers to see Iudon as an embodiment of dangerous femininity rather than as a mother whose grief temporarily transforms her into a murderer.

Predictably, the Variant-redactor revises Geoffrey's decidedly non-judgmental presentation of Ronwein in ways that immediately and steadily villainize the woman whose queenship he presents as undermining Christianity in Britain. While the Vulgate account introduces Ronwein as the girl "cuius pulcritudo nulli secunda uidebatur [whose beauty seemed second to none]," the First Variant introduces its version of the character, called Ronwen, as "pulcra facie ac uenusto corpore [beautiful in face and pleasing in body]" (*HRB* 100.340; *FV* 100.3). By defining her as an attractive body as well as a beautiful face, the Variant-redactor suggests the princess's power to seduce from the outset—a suggestion he repeats in the context of King Uortigernus's lusting after her. Whereas the Vulgate says that the king, "uisa facie puellae, ammiratus est tantum eius decorem et incaluit [seeing the face of the girl, was astonished by her great beauty/charm, and he began to glow with passion]," the Variant version adds another mention of Ronwen's body: "At ille mox uisa puella miratus faciem decoram cum uenusto corpore incaluit [But soon he, at the sight of the girl, marveling at her beautiful face along with her pleasing body, began to burn with passion]" (*HRB* 100.348; *FV* 100.11–12). By twice mentioning her body, the redactor makes Ronwen more seductive, and more dangerous, than her Vulgate counterpart. The Variant-redactor then retains his source's description of Satan entering the inebriated king's heart and causing him to desire this young woman, despite her being non-Christian (*HRB* 100.358–60; *FV* 100.21–23). However, the redactor also underscores the danger that Ronwen's paganism poses to the king as well as to his realm, augmenting the description of her wedding with the detail that the king was "nil uerescens de sua christianitate [respecting nothing whatsoever concerning his Christian

faith]" (*FV* 100.29–30). As a result, the woman whose body presents an immediate temptation to Uortigernus becomes a threat to both the king's soul and the kingdom's Christian identity.

The Variant-redactor then makes further modifications to Geoffrey of Monmouth's Vulgate text that villainize Ronwen as a character. One major modification is to expand Geoffrey's description of how Saints Germanus and Lupus of Troyes revive orthodox Christianity in Britain, with the result that Ronwen becomes a contributor to the general threat that paganism poses to the Christian faith (*HRB* 101.369–76; *FV* 102.3–16). Through other small additions, the redactor underscores the struggle to reinforce orthodox Christianity despite the corrupting influences of the Pelagian heresy and the Saxon invasion—thereby raising the stakes involved in Ronwen's marriage. He makes the issue of Britain's Christianity more prominent, and therefore more significant, than it is in the Vulgate by stating not only that the missionaries are sent "a papa Romano [by the Roman pontiff]" himself, but also how important it is that the British people "ecclesie catholice redderetur [be turned back in the direction of the catholic church]" and away from the foreign elements that constitute the "hostes [enemy]" (*FV* 102.9–15).

The other major modification that the redactor makes to this story is to reposition the abovementioned passage about heresy so that it appears immediately before Ronwen poisons Uortimerus, thereby integrating her story into that of the struggle for theological control of Britain. The redactor transitions from his extended description of the ecclesiastical reform movement straight into Ronwen's murder of the good king: "Postquam ergo restituta est fides Christi per totum regnum Britannie ad integrum hostesque deleti qui et fidem et populum inipugnabant, inuidia dyaboli qui Ronwen nouercam Uortimerii ad hoc nephas instigauit ueneno peritit Uortimerius [Afterwards, because the faith of Christ had been revived throughout the entire realm of Britain to the point of renewal and the enemy annihilated that had been assailing both the faith and people, the envy of Satan incited Ronwen (the stepmother of Uortimerius) to this crime: Uortimerius perished by poison]" (*FV* 102.14–17).²¹ The cause-and-effect structure of this sentence defines Ronwen as part of a pagan conspiracy to destroy Christian Britain, thereby causing her to differ greatly from her Vulgate counterpart.

In every case but one (Lavinia's), the Variant-redactor compresses and alters the stories of Geoffrey of Monmouth's good female figures in ways that decrease their narrative or historical significance. In addition, he replaces Geoffrey's nonjudgmental treatment of potentially problematic female figures with his own comments that turn these females into villains. Therefore, through his process of redaction, this anonymous cleric

undermines Geoffrey's secular and decidedly feminist version of the British past—including the concept of female kingship.

Wace's Translation of Female Figures in Context

Guenivere is the most frequently studied female figure in the versions of the British past that Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Laȝamon created. Because Wace's translation of Geoffrey's history preserves his source's "inherent structure without any major changes of proportion or thematic emphasis," readers might expect Wace's characters to be essentially the same as Geoffrey's.²² However, comparative analysis of the female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portions of Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Wace's *roman de Brut* reveals that even the first translation of this Latin text into a vernacular language implicitly rejects Geoffrey's feminist version of the past. Through small-scale revisions to his source text, Wace profoundly changes the identities and functions of the many female figures that Geoffrey of Monmouth created. Wace's undermining of both the concept of female kingship and the positive presentation of female figures that makes female kingship an attractive alternative to rule by males can be partially explained through the cultural context and personal attitudes that shaped his translation of the early British past.

Wace's *roman de Brut* departs more radically from *The History of the Kings of Britain* than the First Variant does, not only because the poet translates Latin prose into Anglo-Norman French verse but also because he translates (in the sense of relocates) Galfridian characters; consequently, these characters come to inhabit a fictional world similar to the world his probable audience inhabited. The scholarly consensus is that Wace translated Geoffrey's history to suit his likely target audience: King Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their court in England.²³ Because Wace completed his translation very early in the reign of Henry II, it is possible that he wrote an uncommissioned translation but received a prebend at Bayeux because his work pleased the king.²⁴ However, regardless of whether it was commissioned or not, Wace's translation of *The History of the Kings of Britain* possesses characteristics that appear designed to please the new king and queen as well as other high-ranking nobles. Using several mutually reinforcing types of alterations, the *roman de Brut* enables aristocratic Norman readers to feel that they have achieved possession of British history as well as British territory.²⁵ The poem uses high-medieval terms that liken warriors of the ancient and early medieval periods to their twelfth-century knightly counterparts, increases the prominence and political significance of France within the narrative, presents place-name and regime changes as both normative and natural,

and emphasizes continuity rather than disruption when dominion over Britain passes from one ethnic group to another; as a result, both the Norman Conquest in particular and the idea of conquest in general become naturalized.²⁶

Another point of scholarly consensus is that, as Wace mediates between the culture of French speakers on the European continent and that of the French-speaking nobility in England, he infuses the *roman de Brut* with a greater degree of courtliness than is present in Geoffrey's history while reflecting a "crusading ethos"—an ethos palpable in additions to the Galfridian narrative that consist mainly of "didactic or moralising asides."²⁷ French literature specialist Véronique Zara has documented some of the ways in which Wace "intertwines" ecclesiastical with secular history, allots narrative space "proportionally to each king's merit," and develops a portrait of King Artur that celebrates him as much for his moral qualities and "spirit of *courtoisie*" as for his conquests and good governance of Britain.²⁸ Nevertheless, the impact of the *roman de Brut*'s courtliness and moralizing on the female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of the poem has received little attention. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter explores how the combination of courtliness and moralizing shapes Wace's translation of the concept of female kingship in particular, and that of female power in general. This translation produces images of women that send conflicting messages regarding both gender roles and the moral status of females relative to males.

In order to account for the conflicting images of women in Wace's translation of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, readers can look to his Latin sources as well as to his attitudes toward three rulers of the twelfth century: Empress Matilda, King Henry II, and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Wace's use of both the Vulgate and Variant texts throughout the composition process of his *roman de Brut* supplied him with conflicting images of women that he could select, combine, or change; however, his consistent favoring of the Variant-redactor's version of events and his choices in shaping the content of his translation suggest that Wace did not accept Galfridian historiography.²⁹ Study of Wace's *roman de Brut* in the context of his surviving oeuvre reveals that his rejection of Geoffrey's Vulgate version of *The History of the Kings of Britain* is probably a function of the poet's personal bias against Empress Matilda in particular and lack of personal interest in female rulers in general, attitudes which clashed with the pro-Matilda account of the British past he was translating. The poet's antipathy toward Empress Matilda is evident in what is likely the earliest of his extant works, *La vie de sainte Marguerite*. As French literature specialist Françoise H. M. Le Saux has argued, this hagiographical poem has a definite political slant: it appears to be "a subtle attempt to 'devalue' the

prestige potential offered by her grandmother, St Margaret of Scotland, to Henry I's daughter Matilda, through a campaign aiming to bolster the popularity of St Margaret of Antioch."³⁰ The latest of Wace's extant works, *Le roman de Rou* (composed 1160–74) also has an anti-Matilda slant: it allots to the empress and the civil war she fought fewer than fifty lines in an account of more than 11,000, and it disputes the version of the past that Empress Matilda favored.³¹ Medieval historiography specialist Carolyn Anderson has documented how "Wace represents Matilda in a very limited and controlled way as the source of Henry II's inheritance" and presents her as a heroine in need of rescue.³²

Furthermore, the *roman de Rou*'s omissions that downplay the roles of queens have caused scholars to conclude that Wace lacked interest in female rulers—including Henry II's mother Empress Matilda. In contrast to his contemporary Stephen of Rouen, a poet and chronicler who in his *Draco Normannicus* "makes space in his narrative for the concerned mother," Wace does not.³³ In fact, even when his source includes material about King Harold II's mother, Wace chooses not to discuss her, and he says little about either Eleanor of Aquitaine or Empress Matilda; more specifically, as he summarily dismisses Empress Matilda, he fails to mention either her second marriage or her active support of her son Henry II—despite his sources' including that information.³⁴ Wace also makes Empress Matilda's hereditary right to rule England a non-issue by claiming that, because King Stephen harassed her so greatly, "le destraint li roiz que son droit recongnut, / du regne l'erita [she recognized the king's right, giving to him the kingdom as an inheritance]."³⁵ By presenting Stephen as having the right to reign, the poet suggests that a monarch is by definition male.

However, Wace's *roman de Rou* does more than push Empress Matilda into the background of its account of Norman history: it presents a version of Norman history that might have alienated both Matilda and the Norman aristocrats who had supported her reign as well as her father's. Although Wace includes a detailed account of King Henry I's struggle for power against his older brothers, this account does not reflect what van Houts describes as the "divine justice" reading of Henry I's ascent to the throne—a reading to which both he and his daughter Empress Matilda subscribed.³⁶ Moreover, the *roman de Rou* presents Robert Curthose (King Henry I's older brother)—not Henry himself—as having a viable claim to the English throne and offers support for the reign (in association with his father) of Henry the Young King by presenting him as one of three Henrys; the poet's expression of such antiestablishment views, according to van Houts, could have resulted in King Henry II's decision to ask someone other than Wace to tell the story of his ancestors.³⁷ In his *roman*

de Rou, Wace acknowledges Benoît of Saint-Maure's replacing him as the king's official historian.³⁸

Although it is impossible to know what sequence of events led to Wace's loss of Henry II's support for what was to be his last historiographical project, the poet's refusal to conform to royal expectations and produce pro-Norman propaganda—particularly his refusal to flatter Empress Matilda—was the likely cause. Given that Stephen of Rouen in his *Norman Dragon* credits the empress with her son Henry II's survival, and Robert of Torigni in his *Gesta Normannorum ducum* labels the empress's three sons (Henry, Geoffrey, and William) as their grandfather Henry I's "heredes legitimos [rightful heirs]," Wace is the exception to the historiographical rule during the reign of Henry II because he refuses to conform to his king's expectations.³⁹ Certainly, Wace's estrangement from the king could well have stemmed from resentment of wrongs he felt the king had done him.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the fact that Wace displays an anti-Matilda bias throughout his career as a writer of hagiographical as well as historiographical works suggests that a partial explanation for the conflicting images of women in the earlier of his two surviving historiographical works, the *roman de Brut*, is that it is a translation of a pro-Matilda history by a man who himself was anti-Matilda.

Another means of accounting for the conflicting images of women present in Wace's translation of *The History of the Kings of Britain* is the poet's personal acquaintance with King Henry II. This acquaintance would have facilitated the poet's knowledge of the awkward challenge that Eleanor of Aquitaine posed to the sovereignty of her husband, knowledge that could have produced conflicting images of female power in the *roman de Brut*.⁴¹ By the time Wace completed his translation of Geoffrey's history in 1155, Eleanor and Henry were a successful royal couple: their son William had been born in 1153, and they had celebrated their coronation in 1154. Nevertheless, the duchy of Aquitaine that Eleanor had brought to this marriage gave her the power to threaten her second husband's sovereignty, power she later used. In 1168, when Henry granted control of the Aquitaine to Eleanor and sent her to the Continent, she took action against him: she supported—and perhaps incited—the 1173 rebellion of her sons against their father.⁴² The king's awareness of the potential threat that his queen posed to his sovereignty resulted in her being "secluded and closely watched wherever she was, in England or on the Continent" from 1173 until Henry's death in July 1189.⁴³

Eleanor's determination to support her son Richard's sovereignty and vanquish her second husband is evident in her behavior after Henry II suffered defeat at the hands of King Philip Augustus of France and his own sons Richard and John, and then died two days later.⁴⁴ Once freed

from captivity, the queen not only traveled throughout England ordering the release of many other people whom the king had imprisoned but also “ordered all free men of the kingdom” to serve Richard faithfully; she even governed England on her son’s behalf until his return.⁴⁵ Given Wace’s desire—one he expresses in the *roman de Rou*—to please both his king and queen, he was in an awkward position when composing his *roman de Brut* early on in Henry II’s reign.⁴⁶ It is therefore possible that the historical moment at which Wace translated Geoffrey’s history, one at which the new king wanted his queen consort to accept his supremacy but his queen wished to wield real political power, encouraged the poet’s glorification of female power within strictly circumscribed limits.

Still another means of accounting for the conflicting images of women in the *roman de Brut* is Eleanor of Aquitaine herself: given the links between Wace and the royal couple that Lori J. Walters has documented, Eleanor is both the most immediate and the most likely source of inspiration for the way in which Wace presents the queen consorts and female kings that appear in his translation of Geoffrey’s history. According to Walters, the poet completed his *roman de Brut* at Henry II’s request, chose to begin his *roman de Rou* by praising Eleanor as both a participant in the Crusades and the means by which her husband could gain access to the legitimatizing power of Charlemagne’s bloodline, and probably viewed Eleanor as “the consummate maternal figure of her day” because of her function as queen of “the West’s two leading dynasties.”⁴⁷ Walters has also documented how Wace’s *roman de Brut* performs key cultural work: it appropriates Norman French as the official language of Henry II’s empire by presenting Henry—not Louis VII of France—as the Charlemagne of his day, and it promotes this empire by presenting England as “a country sanctified by divine favor and connected to Holy Church.”⁴⁸ This evidence of Wace’s ties to both Henry II and his queen enables readers to raise questions about how the poet responded to Eleanor through his *roman de Brut*.

Given Walters’s characterization of Wace as “God’s Augustinian-inspired servant who wields words as metaphorical weapons in the battle to ‘evangelize all the nations,’” readers might ask whether a man so devoted to Augustinian ideals replicates Augustinian misogyny when treating female figures.⁴⁹ In addition, although Walters interprets the poet’s description of Genuèvre as “buene parliere [well spoken]” as signaling Eleanor’s status as “the ‘roman’ and linguistically superior side” of her marriage, readers might also ask whether rumors about the queen’s supposed sexual exploits while on Crusade shaped Wace’s depiction not only of Artur’s queen but also of the many queen consorts and female kings whose stories he translated into a new cultural context.⁵⁰ The completion of the *roman de Brut*

early in Henry II's reign raises an additional question about Eleanor: as Wace attempted to increase the solidity of the Norman empire, might he have simultaneously expressed anxiety about how easily a queen's misbehavior could damage or destroy what King Henry II was trying to build? The information available about Wace's personal attitudes encourages readers to answer all three of these questions in the affirmative.

Available indicators of personal attitudes that would have affected how Wace approached the task of retelling the early history of Britain lead to the conclusion that he was considerably more traditional in his thinking than Geoffrey of Monmouth. Although Wace's roles as a *clerc lisant* and *maitre lisant* would have required him to read texts aloud at court and participate in the education of young nobles, Wace specialist Glyn Burgess asserts that "Wace's view of human life was that of a churchman and a moralist"—whether or not he was a priest.⁵¹ Moreover, extant information regarding Wace's literary career supports the conclusion that his choice of base text, the First Variant, is that of an ecclesiastical cleric rather than a court poet. According to Le Saux, because Wace composed religious works and had "a religious house or personage" as his patron between 1135 and 1145, the Variant version's focus on salvation history was clearly "more compatible with his own aesthetic and historiographical principles" than the Vulgate's secular focus.⁵² The Variant-redactor had already begun the process of transforming a secular text into a moralistic and aggressively Christian one, but Wace's choice of base text signals a rejection of his predecessor's secular approach to historiography and nonjudgmental narrative style that is evident throughout the *roman de Brut*.⁵³

Because Wace takes a more aggressive narrative stance than Geoffrey does, he judges all of his characters more harshly than his predecessor and therefore departs (sometimes drastically) from the narrative that Geoffrey created. As Wace translates examples of female power and powerlessness, this aggressive narrative stance causes him to inject staunchly Christian values into what was an essentially secular history; consequently, he tends to eliminate moral ambiguity and classify Geoffrey's morally questionable females as either truly good or truly wicked. This stance coincides with the Wacean narrator's relishing scenes of women's victimization, with the result that such scenes become more gruesome than in Geoffrey's history. Although these scenes encourage readers to sympathize with the suffering of female figures, they also disempower females by making their suffering a potential source of titillation. Crucially, Wace continues a process that the Variant-redactor began: shifting Geoffrey's heroic and potentially heroic females into traditional gender roles. Wace presents the roles of queen consorts, female kings, and female victims of men's

misdeeds in ways that tend to reduce or nullify the political power and historical significance of Galfridian females. Nevertheless, in some cases, the poet honors the feminist sympathies of Galfridian historiography by describing the characteristics and developing the roles of some female figures more fully than his predecessor.

Developing and Complicating Galfridian Females through Translation

Perhaps as a means of pleasing Queen Eleanor, Wace honors the most distinctive feature of *The History of the Kings of Britain*—the meaningful inclusion of female figures—by not only retaining the female figures Geoffrey created but also adding to their number and strengthening their public presence. In two cases, Wace includes a wife as a potential successor to her royal husband where Geoffrey does not. Whereas Geoffrey's King Lucius has no child to succeed him, Wace's King Luces has no wife to succeed him either (*HRB* 73.8–10; *RB* 5270). In a similar situation, Wace states that King Auguissel of Scotland dies without either a son or a wife to rule in his place while Geoffrey remains silent about Augustelus's immediate family (*HRB* 177.23–25; *RB* 13190–96). Wace also notes the presence of women and/or children where Geoffrey does not: the Saxon leader Henguist sends for his wife and children, the Saxons abandon their wives and sons when fleeing Britain, and the group of settlers from Saxony that arrives later includes women and children (*RB* 6875, 7128, 14723). Furthermore, in the *roman de Brut*, there are children in the group of slaves that Brutus leads (*HRB* 8.89–90; *RB* 180, 219, 510) as well as at King Cassibellan's celebration of his victory over Julius Caesar with the British noblemen and their wives (*HRB* 61.134–37; *RB* 4321–29). Wace's tendency to include family units and information about them gives his female characters a stronger public presence than their Galfridian counterparts have.

When Wace turns his attention to individual female figures that receive brief mentions in the Vulgate and/or Variant versions of Geoffrey's history, he tends to individuate and develop them; this is another way in which he honors Galfridian historiography. When Wace reworks the list of King Ebraucus's fifty children, he builds upon a detail that appears in both the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history—that Ebraucus's daughter Galaes was the most beautiful woman in Britain or Gaul—by identifying the traits of several princesses (*HRB* 27.103–4; *FV* 27.20). Perhaps because he noticed that Geoffrey singled out one daughter for recognition, Wace inserts information about several daughters for whom his predecessor supplies only a name (*HRB* 27.100–4). The poet assigns to

these daughters a range of characteristics: good or bad looks, good or bad manners, and various personality traits (*RB* 1561–70). He individuates Methael as “la plus laie [the ugliest],” Guenlode as “la plus guaie [the liveliest],” Ourar as “la meillor ovriere [the best worker],” Innogin as “la plus parlere [the most talkative],” Anor as “la plus corteise, / Qui mierz sout demener richeise [the best-mannered, who well knew how to spend wealth],” and Gloïgin as “cele fu l’ainnee [the eldest]” as well as “plus fu granz e plus senee [the tallest and the wisest]” (*RB* 1563–70, trans. Weiss).⁵⁴ Wace also honors the Vulgate version of Geoffrey’s history by not providing similar individuation of the males in the list. Nevertheless, the poet’s tendency to judge his characters affects how he develops these female figures, for he divides them into two categories: best and worst.

Creusa, a female figure absent from the Vulgate but present in the Variant account of the founding of Rome, acquires some narrative significance when Wace develops a passing mention of her as the mother of Aeneas’s son Ascanius into a brief subplot (*HRB* 6.48–49; *FV* 6.6–8).⁵⁵ Wace, like the Variant-redactor, identifies his Creusa figure as the daughter of King Priam and the mother of Aeneas’s son (*RB* 84–85). However, by including a description of how she disappears into the crowd as her husband makes his escape from Troy, the poet gives her death the same narrative weight as her son’s escape: Aschanius “de Troie vint od sun pere [had come from Troy with his father]” while Creüsa was not so fortunate: “Al tomulte e al desrei / Kant Eneas de Troie eissi, / En la grant presse la perdi [During the tumult and chaos of Eneas’s escape from Troy, he lost her in the huge throng]” (*RB* 83–88). Wace’s small-scale insertions give several minor female figures more substance than they have in the two Latin sources upon which he drew.

One Galfridian female in particular, the princess of Norway whom Brennius marries, receives substantial development in the *roman de Brut* as an object of desire; consequently, she becomes a more significant character than she is in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. In Geoffrey’s version of the story, the Norwegian princess receives four brief mentions: first, as the means for Brennius to gain the aid of the king of the Norsemen (*HRB* 35.18–19); second, as the woman with whom King Guichtlacus of Denmark is in love and whom he captures from Brennius (36.27–33); third, as half of what Brennius demands his brother return to him—his kingdom of Northumbria and his wife; and fourth, as the woman with whom Guichtlacus returns to Denmark after he agrees to submit to Belinus in exchange for possession of her (38.65–73). In the Variant-redactor’s account, this princess character appears in a slightly compressed version of the same events (*HRB* 35.18–22, 36.23–42; *FV* 35.17–19, 36.1–21).

In the *roman de Brut*, in contrast, the princess of Norway inspires passionate desire in two men. In the case of Gudlac, Wace honors and develops Geoffrey's portrait of the Danish king as passionately in love with the princess. Whereas Geoffrey's Guichtlacus "aestuauerat... amore puellae [burn(s)...with love for the young woman]" and is "ultra modum dolens [grieving to the greatest extent]" over the loss of the lady (*HRB* 36.29–30), Wace's Gudlac does more than desire to regain "s'amie [his beloved]" (*RB* 2452). When he has the opportunity to take his enemy's ships, "n'out que faire des autres nef[s] [he ha(s) no concern for the other ships]"—he cares only about the one carrying his lady (*RB* 2471). Wace ends his account with another detail that suggests the intensity of King Gudlac's feelings for his beloved: "Gudlac issi s'en departi / E en sa terre reverti; / S'amie en ad od sei menea / Que par grant peinne out achatee [So Gudlac departed and returned to his land, taking his beloved with him, whom he had acquired with much suffering]" (*RB* 2595–98). In the case of the princess's husband, however, Wace makes a significant change by having his Brennes be considerably more passionate about his wife than Geoffrey's Brennius is: after Gudlac captures the lady, "Brennes s'en alad fuiant, / De sa feme mult dementant [Brennes fle(es), lamenting his wife]," and he feels more anger and shame at the loss of his wife than at the loss of his land (*RB* 2473–74, 2635–38). Through these details, Wace gives to this female figure greater narrative significance than her Galfridian counterpart possesses although she is a heroine, a character that inspires men's deeds.

Nevertheless, despite her receiving a first mention as the means for Brennes to gain military support from her father, Wace's princess of Norway becomes a female hero who not only has her own desires but also acts on them (*RB* 2390–94). The poet develops this story by describing both the lady's appearance (she is "assez bele e gente [very lovely and fair]") and her resistance to being with Brennes: "Li plaiz li desatalente [She disliked the match]" (*RB* 2439–40). In addition, the poet gives her resistance legitimate grounds: long ago, she had loved the Danish king; he returned her love, and she would have been his had it not been for Brennes (*RB* 2441–45). More importantly, the lady takes action so that she can be with the man she loves: "E ele ad a Gudlac mandé / E tut le conseil descovert / Que Brennes l'ad e il la pert, / E, si forment ne se purchace, / Jamais ne gerrat en sa brace [She had sent to Gudlac and told him of the whole agreement, whereby Brennes had her and Gudlac had lost her, and, if he did not exert himself, he would never lie in her arms]" (*RB* 2446–50). This addition significantly changes the plot of this story by making Gudlac's attempt to rescue her a direct result of her action. Therefore, in Wace's version, the princess takes on the role that Fries has

defined as belonging to the female hero: a female character that takes action to facilitate male success.⁵⁶ Although Wace retains the plotline he inherits from the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history, he develops the female figure that appears in it into a more rounded character and gives her the opportunity to achieve happiness.

When Wace retells the story of Lavinia, he not only develops her story but also complicates it through integrating her mother into it; as a result, he creates a tension between traditional and nontraditional gender roles. Elaborating upon Lavinia's brief appearance in his Latin sources as the woman whom Aeneas wins (along with the realm of Italy), and who becomes the mother of Aeneas's son Silvius, the poet honors Galfridian historiography by attributing political significance to her (*HRB* 6.50–52; *FV* 6.3–4). According to Wace's version of events, Lavine is not only a beautiful woman but also her father's only heir. By asserting that "après lui deveit tut avoir [she would have everything after his death]" (*RB* 48), Wace likens Lavine to the Galfridian characters Helena, daughter of King Coel, and King Octavius's daughter (*HRB* 78.136–43, 81.196–97). Furthermore, despite the fact that she is given away in marriage instead of inheriting the Italian throne, Lavine becomes a more important figure than she is in Geoffrey's history for two reasons: she occupies a greater amount of narrative space in Wace's translation, and she takes on symbolic power when the poet (apparently developing the Variant-redactor's version of events) identifies her as the person for whom the castle of Lavinium is named (*FV* 6.3–5; *RB* 42–72).

More striking, however, is Wace's development of Lavine into the cofounder of the city that will become Rome. Wace adds several lines concerning the name the Variant-redactor assigns to Lavinia's son Silvius, 'Postumus' (*FV* 6.13). These lines explain that Lavine does not bear her son Silvius until after Eneas dies—information Wace repeats when he explains that Silvius becomes king upon the death of his half-brother Aschanius (*RB* 74–80, 107–10). Lavine, therefore, becomes a founder of the city that will become Rome not only because she is the one surviving parent of the future King Silvius, but also because her stepson Aschanius leaves to her the land on which he has built the city of Alba and grants her ownership of Eneas's castle—a castle named for her—until her death (*RB* 89–96). Moreover, the curious detail that the statues of Troy's gods, which Aschanius tries to remove from Lavinium so that they can be in Alba, magically reappear in their temple in Lavinium reinforces the readers' impression that Lavine—not her son Aschanius—is the keeper of Trojan culture (*RB* 97–104). By granting to Lavine a role traditionally played by males, that of cofounder of a civilization, Wace honors Galfridian historiography.

Nevertheless, a new character, in combination with Wace's development of Lavine's other roles, creates a tension between traditional and nontraditional female roles in the story. The appearance of Lavine's mother, who objects to her daughter's match with Eneas, brings a traditional gender role into the story: that of a queen consort who participates in the process of finding her daughter a husband (*HRB* 6.49–50; *FV* 6.1–3; *RB* 44). In addition, unlike in the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history, Lavine's roles as a piece of property to be exchanged among men and as a love-object are prominent in the *roman de Brut* (*HRB* 6.50–52; *FV* 6.2–6). By making explicit Lavine's role in the transfer of land from Latins, the king of Italy, to Eneas and stating that Eneas “la feme e l'onour quatre anz tint [held wife and domain for four years],” Wace emphasizes her status as property (*RB* 42–48, 67–68, 73). Furthermore, by describing Turnus's love for Lavine in detail, the poet develops her role as the love-object over which Eneas and Turnus battle (*RB* 53–66). The development of these aspects of Lavine's character clash with her image as cofounder of the future Rome, creating a tension within the story that remains unresolved.

When Wace retells the story of the founding of Britain, he makes a gesture toward honoring Galfridian historiography, yet the rest of his account undermines it. At the end of his retelling, the poet demonstrates his apparently intentional inclusion of female figures when, in describing how the Trojans arrive at the uninhabited island that Brutus will soon name Britain, he adds that they “home ne feme n'i troverent [found neither man nor woman]” (*HRB* 16.275–78; *FV* 21.1–2; *RB* 622). For two reasons, however, the element that dominates in this story is Innorgen's status as a victim of circumstance. First, because Wace assigns to Innorgen's father King Pandrasus a longer speech in which to respond to the victorious Brutus's request for goods and his daughter, Pandrasus can now dwell on his pain at losing his daughter as well as lament that he must give her to a man whom he considers “a cruel home e a felun [a cruel and wicked man]”—despite Brutus's bravery and noble birth (*RB* 579–82). By presenting a negative image of Brutus here, Wace encourages readers to sympathize with both the father who loses his daughter and the daughter who must marry against both her own and her father's will. Second, because Wace follows the Variant-redactor in omitting the interaction in the Vulgate version in which Brutus kisses and comforts his wife as she grieves for her lost homeland, his Innorgen has no source of solace as she mourns while his Brutus lacks a loving, sensitive side (*HRB* 15.270–16.275; *FV* 15.16–18). Through this omission, Wace presents his Innorgen primarily as a victim of circumstance who is an object of exchange between her father and husband-to-be (*RB* 575–80).

Through these two departures from the Galfridian account of the founding of Britain, Wace undermines not only the positive image of Brutus and Innogin's relationship that Geoffrey so carefully constructed but also the Galfridian brand of heroism that Brutus embodies. Examination of all the female figures that appear in the non-Arthurian portion of the *roman de Brut* confirms that, with the exceptions just noted, Wace undermines Geoffrey of Monmouth's sympathetic presentation of female figures.

Geoffrey's Problematic Females Purified or Villainized

Wace's tendency to moralize causes his *roman de Brut* to undermine a key aspect of Galfridian historiography: the neutral presentation of morally questionable female figures. When retelling the stories of such figures, Wace purifies two but villainizes the rest of them. The purification process occurs on a small scale with the briefly mentioned wife of King Edelfridus. In Geoffrey's account, King Edelfridus repudiates his first wife, banishing her from his lands in Northumbria when she is pregnant with the future King Edwinus (*HRB* 190.227–31). The Galfridian version of the story does not say that the queen has done anything wrong, just that her husband banishes her and remarries. Wace's poem, in contrast, emulates the Variant version in that it avoids raising moral questions about this woman (*FV* 190.11–13). The poet simply says of the king, here called Elfrid, that Elfrid and his former rival for control of Britain "femmes pristrent e enanz orent / Dous fiz orent a un termine [took wives and had children, and had sons at the same time]" (*RB* 14006–7).

In the case of Merlin's mother, Wace makes an effort that the Variant-redactor does not: he eliminates her problematic characteristics. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin's mother is a nun who conceives her son through sexual intercourse with an incubus (*HRB* 106.521–107.540), but Wace makes several small-scale adjustments that produce a truly holy female figure and liken Merlin's conception to that of Jesus. First the poet adds the detail that Merlin's mother was a nun "de mult bone vie [of exemplary life]" (*RB* 7399). Then he inserts a description of her demeanor that suggests both modesty and an awareness of her awkward situation: in response to King Vortiger's question about who Merlin's father is, "la none tint le chief enclin; / Quant ele out pensé un petit [the nun bow(s) her head. After reflecting a while,]" she speaks (*RB* 7412–13). Unlike her Galfridian counterpart who claims to have known no man, but then admits that something made love to her in the form of a man (*HRB* 107.531–39), Wace's version of this character becomes totally innocent of wrongdoing because of several details

he adds. For example, she claims complete ignorance of what sort of being visited her, saying she does not know whether it was a man or not; thus, Wace eliminates the potential moral taint of the Galfridian visitor's good looks, the mention of which makes the Galfridian nun seem susceptible to lust (*HRB* 107.534; *RB* 7414–18). Furthermore, Merlin's mother describes her visitor as a ghostly lover and her sexual encounters as occurring with a spiritual being that does not take a definite human form: “Quant jo fui alques grant nurrie, / Ne sai se fu fantosmerie, / Une chose veneit suvent / Ki me baisout estreitement. / Cumë hume parler l'oeie, / E cumë hume le senteie, / E plusurs feiz od mei parlout / Que neient ne se demustrout. / Tant m'ala issi aprismant / E tant m'ala suvent baisant, / Od mei se culcha si conçui, / Unches hume plus ne conui [When I was a full-grown novice, some thing—I don't know if it was an apparition—often came to me and kissed me intimately. I heard it speak like a man; I felt it as if it were a man, and many times it spoke with me, without ever making itself known. So long did it continue to approach me and to kiss me that it lay with me and I conceived. I knew no other man]” (*RB* 7421–32). Because Wace alters the circumstances of Merlin's conception, the magician's mother appears to have had relations with an apparition that she can hear and feel but not see.

Although her impregnation by a spirit likens Merlin's mother to the Virgin Mary, Merlin's conception becomes less problematic than in Geoffrey's account and more like the Incarnation for two additional reasons. First, because his mother is a novice at the time of this encounter (a woman who has not yet fully committed herself to a religious community), her sexual activity does not violate a nun's solemn vows. Second, by transforming the Galfridian situation in which the spirit makes love to her “saepius [many times]” (*HRB* 107.537–39) into one in which it speaks with her several times but lies with her after approaching her for a long time, Wace allows readers to assume that only one confusing but innocent sexual encounter occurs. In the *roman de Brut*, the king's wise man still defines this spiritual being as an incubus demon, but Wace's version of events removes potential guilt from Merlin's mother by developing the Galfridian version's claim that these demons take human form in order to have sex with women (*HRB* 107.547–49). Through the details that “bien prenent humaine figure / E ço cunsent bien lur nature. / Mainte meschine unt deceüe / E en tel guise purgeüe [they easily take human shape and it agrees well with their nature. They have deceived many girls and ravished them in this way]” (*RB* 7451–54), Merlin's mother becomes a victim of deception and therefore even more sympathetic than she is in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. This information, along with the definition of the incubus demons as incapable of great harm but capable

of deception (*RB* 7450), encourages readers to view Merlin's mother as an innocent victim of male dishonesty whose encounter with a spiritual being does not corrupt her. When dealing with other morally questionable female figures, however, Wace villainizes them through a moralizing style of narration. As a result, Geoffrey's Iudon and Ronwein become truly evil and receive harsh condemnation in the *roman de Brut*.

Geoffrey's Iudon, the mother who avenges one son's death by killing the other, becomes Wace's Ludon whom the poet presents as not only foolish but also evil. Although the Variant-redactor's focus on the murder itself rather than on the reasons for it makes his version of this female character seem more blameworthy than her Galfridian counterpart, Wace's development of the story transforms her into a villain. By ending with the public's reaction to the murder, that reaction becomes the story's moral: for a long time after the event, people talk about how she took her vengeance by murdering her son and therefore "pur l'un filz les dous perdi [for one son lost both]" (*RB* 2180). This moral presents her act of vengeance as foolish. However, Wace's description of Porreus's murder transforms this female figure into something truly sinister. Whereas Geoffrey presents the murder as a potentially justified crime of passion and mitigates the mother's responsibility for both the act itself and the civil war that follows it, Wace presents her act as sinister, cold-blooded, demented, and sinful (*HRB* 33.298–304). It becomes sinister when Wace rejects both Geoffrey's phrasing, "nacta ergo tempus quo ille sopitus fuerat [taking advantage then of a time at which he was asleep]" (*HRB* 33.301–2), and the Variant-redactor's phrasing that describes the mother as attacking when her son is "sompno oppressum [weighed down with sleep]" (*FV* 33.15). Instead, the poet introduces the murder in this way: "Une nuit que cil se giseit / E tut aseür se dormeit, . . . [One night when he was lying down and sleeping in complete confidence of safety, . . .]" (*RB* 2169–70). Because Ludon attacks when her victim feels completely safe but is actually defenseless in his bed, the murder becomes truly sinister.

Wace's additions to the story then depict Ludon as cold-blooded, demented, and sinful. By adding the detail that Ludon and her maid-servants arrive in Porreus's room with "cotels tranchanz suz lur aisseles [sharp knives under their armpits]" (*RB* 2172), Wace creates an impression of cold-blooded calculation on the mother's part. He then reinforces this impression by adding the graphic detail that Porreus dies when "la gargate li unt trenchiee [they cut his throat]" (*RB* 2173). Although the poet's reaction to Ludon—"Fud mes mere si enragiee! [Was there ever such a crazed mother?]"—has the potential to mitigate her responsibility for the crime, readers are likely to interpret Ludon as sadistic rather than

distraught because Wace presents her mental state as the cause of the women's cutting open the victim's throat (*RB* 2173–74). Finally, Wace condemns Ludon as sinful, remarking as the narrator, “Deus! ki vit mais si fait pecchié! [God! Who ever saw such a sin!]” (*RB* 2175). Through this comment, Wace replaces Galfridian neutrality with condemnation.

In a similar manner, when Wace follows the Variant-redactor in referring to Geoffrey's Ronwein as Ronwen in the *roman de Brut*, he develops the First Variant's presentation of her and condemns her as a temptress. Apparently rejecting Geoffrey's version of the story, which does not condemn Ronwein and presents both her husband King Vortegirinus and her father Hengistus as blameworthy, in favor of the Variant-redactor's version that both sexualizes and villainizes Ronwen as part of a pagan conspiracy, Wace continues the process of transforming a loyal daughter into a servant of the Devil (*HRB* 99.299–105.498; *FV* 100.1–102.24). This choice is in keeping with Wace's heavy-handed moralizing throughout his Vortiger sequence.⁵⁷ Having chosen to develop the potentially dangerous aspects of this female character, her alluring beauty and the power to seduce a future husband that such beauty gives her, Wace has Ronwen enter the *roman de Brut* as a temptation to King Vortiger that poses an immediate threat to his soul: “La meschine ot le cors mult gent, / E de vis fu bele forment; / Bele fu mult e avenant, / De bele grosse e de bel grant; / Devant lu rei fu, desfublee, / Qui merveilles l'ad esgardee [The girl had a fine body and a very beautiful face; she was fair and comely, handsome in shape and size. Uncloaked, she stood before the king, who could not keep his eyes off her]” (*RB* 6981–86). As in the Variant version of Geoffrey's history, the emphasis in Wace's translation is on the young woman's alluring body (*FV* 100.12). This translation significantly alters the story, however, when it transforms the Variant-redactor's Ronwen from the recipient of the king's kiss into the bestower of a kiss on the king (*FV* 100.16–18; *RB* 6973–74). Because she plays the active role in this interaction, Ronwen becomes a seductress. When the gaze of the narrator blends into that of King Vortiger, this young woman becomes a body that—because it is already “uncloaked”—could be undressed further. The result of this initial description is that Ronwen becomes a powerfully seductive woman.

Then, although Wace acknowledges that the king “bien ot beü [had drunk well]” (*RB* 6987), he stresses much more than Geoffrey how the Devil works through Ronwen. Geoffrey says twice that Satan entered Vortegirinus's heart and caused him to want intercourse with a pagan woman, but Wace not only describes how the Devil enticed the king to taint his soul through desire for a pagan woman but also vehemently decries the sin that the king commits: “Tant l'ad Diables

timoné, / Ki maint home ad a mal turné, / D'amur e de rage l'esprist / De prendre la fille Henguist. / Deus, quel hunte! Deus, quel pechié! / Tant l'ad Deiables desveied, / Ne l'ad pas pur ço refusee / Que paene ert, de paiens nee [The Devil enticed him so much, who has turned so many men to evil, that he inflamed him with love and desire to take Henguist's daughter. God, what shame! God, what sin! The Devil led him so far astray, he would not refuse to marry her though she was a heathen, born of heathens]" (*HRB* 100.357–60; *RB* 6989–96). By emphasizing the sinfulness of Vortiger's union with Ronwen as well as how far astray the Devil must lead this Christian man before he desires a pagan woman, Wace encourages his readers to reject this dangerously seductive temptress.

Having established Ronwen's link with the Devil, Wace first associates her with the threat that paganism poses to both British Christianity and her husband's soul and then reduces her to a stock character. By repeating the fact that Ronwen is "paiene [heathen]" immediately after reporting her marriage to the British king, the poet suggests that her union with the king begins the process of undermining Christianity in Britain (*RB* 7009–10). Moreover, by elaborating upon a statement that appears in both the Vulgate and Variant texts—that the wedding happens on the same day as the king meets this woman—with the comment, "Prestre n'i fist beneïçun, / Messe n'i ot, ne ureisun [No priest gave a blessing, there was neither mass nor prayer,]" Wace emphasizes that King Vortiger has endangered his soul through this sacrilegious union (*HRB* 100.365; *FV* 100.29–30; *RB* 7011–14). Shifting the narrative emphasis onto Ronwen's otherness enables Wace to villainize her significantly as well as emphasize the spiritual threat she poses to her husband. Finally, however, Ronwen becomes a mere stock character, for Wace revises the account of her murder of Vortimerius so that she has her stepson poisoned not simply out of envy of his virtue but "par grant haenge e par envie / ...cume male marastre [through great hate and envy...like a wicked stepmother]" (*HRB* 102.415–16; *FV* 102.16–17; *RB* 7156–57). By twice branding Ronwen as hateful, Wace reduces Geoffrey of Monmouth's problematic but decidedly not evil Ronwein to a stock character: the wicked stepmother (*RB* 7156–59).

Although Wace replaces Geoffrey's neutral presentation of Iudon and Ronwein with harsh condemnation, he villainizes Geoffrey's benign goddess Diana even more; as a result, she turns into a deceptive devil whose female form taints all women. Wace's reinterpretation of Diana is surprising given the Variant-redactor's generosity to her: the redactor resists his usual tendencies to judge and villainize problematic females by not condemning the pagan goddess. Unlike Wace, the redactor simply condenses

Geoffrey's straightforward account of Brutus's worship of Diana (*FV* 16.1–35). In the Vulgate version of Brutus's travels, the hero falls asleep after making his sacrifice and praying to Diana according to the correct rituals (*HRB* 16.291–302). According to Geoffrey, Diana's appearance "quasi tertia hora noctis, qua dulciore sopore mortales premuntur [at about the third hour of the night, when human beings are engulfed in deepest sleep]" associates her with dreams, not sins (*HRB* 16.302–3). In addition, Brutus interprets the vision he receives from the goddess—and presumably the goddess herself—positively, for he labels what Diana says to him as either a "sompnus [dream]" or a prophecy through which "dea uiua uoce praedixerat patriam quam aditurus erat [the goddess, with her living voice, had foretold the land of which he would take possession]" (*HRB* 17.313–14). His companions also respond to this prophecy very positively, "maximo gaudio fluctuantes [filled with the greatest delight]" (*HRB* 17.316).

In contrast to Geoffrey's tolerant and positive presentation of the details of Brutus's worship of the goddess, Wace's presentation is harshly judgmental. The poet immediately characterizes his Diane as a "deuesse [goddess]" and a "divineresse [prophetess]" who "diables esteit, ki la gent / Deceveit par enchantement [was a devil who deceived the people through sorcery]" (*RB* 635–38). After labeling her a devil, the poet associates the idea of deception with her female form, for Diane was "semblance de feme perneit / Par quei le pople deceveit [taking the appearance of a woman by which to delude them]" (*RB* 639–40). He then develops a portrait of her as a deceiver by commenting, "Diane se fesait numer / E deuesse del bois clamer [She called herself Diane, claiming to be goddess of the forest]," and he undermines the authority of her words through his narration: "Vis li fu . . . Que la deuesse li diseit [It seemed to (Brutus) . . . that the goddess said]" (*RB* 641–42, 679–80). By challenging both Diane's status as a goddess and the authenticity of her prophetic utterance, Wace challenges her authority and thereby discredits her. Having already demonized Geoffrey's Diana, Wace does the same to the other females from Roman mythology that Brutus encounters.

Whereas Geoffrey of Monmouth labels the Sirens as monsters but does not associate their gender with monstrosity, Wace develops them into temptresses shaped by the Devil himself. Geoffrey's brief description of the Sirens makes them a physical obstacle to the Trojans' safe passage: "Apparuerunt eis monstra maris uocata Sirenes, quae ambiendo naues fere ipsas obruerunt; utumque tamen elapsi [The monsters of the sea called the Sirens appeared to them, which by circling their ships nearly sank them; nevertheless, they slipped away somehow]" (*HRB* 17.327–28). Wace's interest in condemning the Sirens in theological terms contrasts strongly with the Variant-redactor's Galfridian portrayal

of them as a physical obstacle for Brutus and his men: they are “monstra maris, apparuerunt eis; que ambiendo naues fere obruebant [monsters of the sea, (that) appeared to them; they nearly sank the ships by circling them]” (*FV* 17.9–10). Wace’s Sirens are alluring, so they pose a greater threat to the Trojans than their Galfridian counterparts: in a substantial interpolation, the poet describes them as sea monsters with women’s heads and fishes’ bodies below the navel that “as mariniers unt fait maint mal [have done much harm to sailors]” (*RB* 738). They do this harm because they “duces voix unt, dulcement chantent [have soft voices and sing sweetly]” (*RB* 740) and, through their song, “les fols atraient / E a deceivre les asaient [attract fools and try to deceive them]” (741–42). As a result, Wace’s Sirens fit a negative female stereotype not only because they deceive men but also because they are traps: “Mult funt a criendre les sereines / Kar de felonie sunt pleines [They are greatly to be feared, because they are so treacherous],” for “ne puet pas d’eles eschaper / Huem ki bien ne s’en seit garder [a man unable to protect himself cannot escape them]” (*RB* 753–56).

Due to Wace’s word choice, the Sirens pose a threat to men’s souls as well as to their lives. The Sirens endanger lives by using song to attract and deceive men, causing them to depart from “lur veie [their way]”; furthermore, if the Sirens’ sweet song causes men not to notice soon enough what is happening, they “tant les funt par mer foleier / Ke sovent les funt periller; / U al mains lur dreit eire perdent [are made to wander so much over the seas that often they perish, or at least lose their right path]” (*RB* 740–49). The first time Wace mentions the concept of losing the right path, it has only literal meaning because it refers to the Sirens’ clinging to ships so that they crash into rocks or encounter other dangers (*RB* 750–52), but the second time he uses the phrase, its context causes it to take on spiritual meaning: “Figure portent de Diable, / La cui ovre est tant delitable / E tant est duce a maintenir / K’a peine s’en poet l’on partir; / E cil ki a s’ovre s’aert / Sa dreite veie e sun cors pert, / Si come cil vait malement / Ki as sereinnes trop entent [They get their shape from the Devil, whose handiwork is so delightful and so sweet to live with that it is hard to leave, and he who holds fast to it loses his path and his right way, just as he who listens overmuch to the Sirens comes to a bad end]” (*RB* 757–64). This passage makes falling under the spell of the Sirens’ song analogous to losing one’s “path” and “right way”; therefore, it associates female allurement with damnation. In addition, if one translates the first line of this passage (“Figure portent de Diable”) literally, as “They carry the form of the Devil,” then both Wace’s condemnation of the Sirens and his implied condemnation of womankind become even more palpable. The final detail Wace adds to this sequence, that only

with “grant peine [great difficulty]” do the Trojans escape, reinforces the readers’ impression that the Sirens embody a negative stereotype of female power (*HRB* 17.328; *FV* 17.10; *RB* 771). Although Wace’s Sirens do not suffer the kind of “valid misogynistic aggression” that Jocelyn Catty argues “part-woman, part-monster” figures encounter when in combat with males, they do suffer the Wacean narrator’s aggression: his disgust with and verbal attack upon their monstrous femininity.⁵⁸

Wace’s tendency to translate potentially evil female characters into truly evil ones is likewise evident in his treatment of King Leir’s daughters Gonorilla and Regau. In both Geoffrey’s and the Variant-redactor’s versions of events, Cordeilla’s older sisters commit only two wrongs: flattering their father, and responding to problems within their respective households by stripping him of his retinue (*HRB* 31.153–55, 31.186–207; *FV* 31.1–60). Admittedly, Wace labels his Leir as “fel [cruel]” (*RB* 1789) because he mistreats Cordeille and describes the king’s sons-in-law as men who “ne voldrent mie tant soffrir / As terres prendre e a saisir [could not wait to take the lands and seize]” Leir’s property (1831–32), but the poet adds details that villainize the characters he calls Gonorille and Ragaü. First, when Gonorille swears that she loves her father more than her own life, Wace interjects as narrator, “Mult par ert plaine de veisdie [She was very cunning]” (*RB* 1691). Through this comment, he makes suspect all that she says subsequently and marks her as dishonest from the outset. He then replaces Geoffrey’s relatively neutral comment, that Regau was “exemplo sororis suae beniuolentiam patris allicere uolens [wishing to lure the favor of her father by following the example of her sister]” (*HRB* 31.149–50), with one that marks his Ragaü as strategic in her deception: “E Ragaü out entendu / Come sa serur out respundu / A ki sis peres tel gré sout / De ço que si forment l’amout. / Gré revout aver ensement [And Ragaü had heard how her sister replied and how grateful her father was that she loved him so much. She wanted that gratitude too]” (*RB* 1705–9). Wace’s description states directly what he might have thought Geoffrey’s comment was implying: that Ragaü is aware of the potential reward for saying what her father wants to hear, and she desires that reward.

In his *roman de Brut*, Wace develops Gonorille into a truly nasty character, has Ragaü emulate her sister’s harshness, and offers a negative assessment of the entire female sex. Gonorille becomes thoroughly nasty because of the traits that Wace attributes to her: she is “mult avere [very miserly]” and, in reaction to her father’s large and inactive retinue, “a grant eschar tint de sun pere [felt nothing but contempt for her father]” (*RB* 1857–58). Furthermore, Gonorille voices this contempt “suvent [often]” (*RB* 1862) and sounds both harsh and unpleasant when

she dismisses her father: “Entrez est en fole riote; / Vielz hom est, desormais redote [He’s become crazily wayward: he’s an old man and now he’s in his dotage]” (RB 1867–68). Wace then depicts Gonorille as having “tant ad...amonesté / E tant ad sun seinnur hasté [so...exhorted and harassed her husband]” that he reduces Leïr’s retinue from forty to thirty men (RB 1885–86). For her part, Ragäü behaves like her sister when she and her husband reduce Leïr’s retinue to five men; in response, Wace condemns them by saying “cil l’ourent mis en vilté [they treated him shamefully]” (RB 1896). In addition to making Cordeille’s older sisters grasping as well as utterly disrespectful to their father, however, Wace inserts a generalization about women that suggests that Gonorille and Ragäü—not the good Cordeille—typify womankind: “Mult i ad poi femes senz vice / E senz racine d’avarice [There are very few women without faults and without avarice rooted in their hearts]” (RB 1883–84). Although the poet refers to Cordeille as Leïr’s “fille fist [true daughter]” (RB 1987), he presents her as a rare exception to the rule that most women are extremely greedy for wealth. Consequently, Wace’s translation of Geoffrey’s story of King Leir and his daughters undermines what *The History of the Kings of Britain* teaches about women: that most of them are good, and some of them are superior to men.

Translating Female Heroism

Because Wace both develops and creates stories in which female figures suffer victimization, he undermines the Galfridian brand of female heroism that is one of the distinguishing characteristics of *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Throughout the *roman de Brut*, Wace encourages readers to sympathize with female victims; nevertheless, by creating narrative intensity through the violent—even gruesome—details of their suffering, he also offers readers potential titillation through these female victims. This tendency is evident in his Arthurian section when the Scots’ surrender to King Artur becomes more dramatic thanks to the presence of women who, carrying their children, beg for mercy with tears and lamentations and do so in a pitiable condition: their clothes are torn and their mourners’ faces are wounded with self-inflicted scratches (HRB 149.166–75; FV 149.19–32; RB 9470–76). When describing Artur’s siege of Paris, Wace elicits the same dual reaction—pity and titillation—from readers by explaining that “enfant e femes grant duel funt [the women and children wept and wailed]” because they were “afamé [starving]” (RB 9986, 9984) and that there were “homes e femes fors eissir, / Sur murs saillir e sur maisuns / E reclamer Deu e ses nuns / Que cil venque que pais lur tienge / Si que mais guerre ne lur

vienge [men and women coming out, jumping on walls and houses and calling upon God by all His names to let him who would give them peace, win, so that war never came to them again]" (*HRB* 155.259–65; *FV* 155.10–18; *RB* 10020–24).

In a similar manner, the translator develops the brief appearance of the sea monster that, in the non-Arthurian portion of both the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history, terrorizes the people of King Morvidus (*HRB* 48.280–86; *FV* 48.13–19). Wace transforms Geoffrey's straightforward description of this creature as "incolas iuxta maritima sine intermissione deuorabat [gulp(ing) down the inhabitants next to the sea without pause]" into a dramatic narrative episode (*HRB* 48.283). He achieves this transformation both by saying that the monster is "homes e femes devurout [devouring men and women]" (*RB* 3427) and by adding a scene of panic: "Les genz s'en aloent fuiant, / Maisuns e viles guerpissant; / Es bois e es hanz munz fuieient / E encor la murir cremeient [The people fled, abandoning houses and towns and escaping to the woods and high mountains, and even there they were frightened of dying]" (3429–32). By elaborating upon the sufferings of both women and men in his account, the poet can elicit readers' sympathy while providing readers with some excitement in the form of violent deaths.

Later in the *roman de Brut*, Wace increases the narrative intensity of his account of a Saxon attack by describing violence against Briton women and children as well as men. As the pagans burn towers and decimate the countryside, witnesses can see "femmes hunir, humes percier, / Enfanz en berz esbüeler [women dishonoured, men impaled, children disembowelled in their cradles]" (*RB* 13484–85). When King Edwine of Northumbria and King Chadwalein of Britain fight for control of Britain, Chadwalein is killing not only enemy warriors but also "femmes fist ocire e enfanz, / Neïs les petiz alaitanz [killing women and children, even those still at the breast]" (*RB* 14421–22). The consistency with which Wace uses female victims for dramatic effect suggests that this is a narrative strategy he chooses to employ.

Nevertheless, the most dramatic example of female victimization in the non-Arthurian portion of the *roman de Brut* is that of Vrsula (Wace's Urséle) and the virgins who accompany her; the horrible circumstances under which they die elicit readers' sympathy as well as provide titillation. As Wace constructs his version of the martyrdom of the virgins who were to become the wives of their countrymen in Brittany, he develops Geoffrey's portraits of female suffering in ways that encourage readers to dwell on, and perhaps enjoy the drama of, female victimization (*HRB* 88.373–95). Wace takes his interpretive cue from the First Variant, which condenses the episode by omitting the young women's reactions

to their prospective marriages, but preserves the plot elements of the storm that sinks most of the ships and the massacre or enslavement of the women who survive the storm; therefore, he elaborates upon the violence of the storm and the suffering of the women as they drown (*FV* 88.1–16). This elaboration presents these female figures as victims of fate whose dramatic deaths his readers can enjoy. The twenty-eight lines he allots to the portion of the story that both Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor keep brief reveal his primary interest in retelling it: the women's suffering (*HRB* 88.383–86; *FV* 88.6–8; *RB* 6041–68).

In contrast to both Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor who put little emphasis on the storm itself, Wace not only particularizes the violence of the storm but also creates a strong contrast between the terrors of the sea and the happy life the young women expected to find after their journey (*RB* 6039–40). The storm brings dark skies, strong winds, and huge waves that sink the ships (*RB* 6041–52), resulting in the panic of sailors and passengers alike: “Esturman n'i poënt aidier, / Ne nuls huem altre conseilier. / Ki dunc oïst crier meschines / E exhalcier voiz feminines, / Palmes batre, chevuls tirer, / Peres e meres regreter, / E geter granz criz e granz plainz / E reclamer Deu e ses sainz, / Ki veïst cum eles mureient / E cum eles s'entreteneient [The helmsmen were unable to help or get advice from anyone else. Whoever could have heard the girls' cries, the women's raised voices, the wringing of hands, the tearing of hair, the laments for fathers and mothers, and the loud weeping and wailing and calling upon God and His saints—whoever could have seen how they were dying as they clung to each other, he would have felt pity, no matter how wicked his heart]” (6053–62). This passage elicits the sympathy of readers—particularly male ones—for these young women: indirectly through the women's terror, mourning, and prayers as well as directly through the narrator's statement that even an evil person would have felt pity when witnessing this scene. Nevertheless, this same passage turns readers into witnesses of a dramatic and exciting disaster at sea—thus providing entertainment and titillation. Wace's narratorial comment only strengthens his readers' feelings of pity and pleasure by underscoring that this is the worst possible massacre of women: “Ja n'eüst le quer tant felun, / Qu'il n'en eüst compassion. / Unches n'oï en nul peril / De femes fait si grant besil; / Mult par i ot nés perilies / E meschines a duel neiees [I have never heard of such a massacre of women in any other peril; there were many ships in danger and many girls miserably drowned]” (*RB* 6063–68).

What is most significant about Wace's retelling of the martyrdom of these young women, however, is the way in which he domesticates Geoffrey of Monmouth's heroic virgins. Wace's virgins, unlike Geoffrey's,

are all willing to accept marriage according to their social rank and are looking forward to having both happiness and wealth; consequently, they are much more traditional and compliant than their Galfridian counterparts (*RB* 6023–24, 6039–40). Furthermore, because in the *roman de Brut* the virgins neither object to being married off nor have an opportunity to refuse intercourse with the barbarian pirates before those of their number who escape drowning are killed or sold as slaves, they cannot prove either their bravery or their capacity for independent thought (6069–76). In contrast to Geoffrey who reports that most of the women are murdered for refusing the sexual advances of their captors but like the Variant-redactor who reports that the women are either massacred or sold to foreign peoples, Wace provides a hagiographical and violent ending to their story. Infusing Geoffrey's secularized martyr story with elements borrowed from the legend of Saint Ursula of Cologne, Geoffrey's translator emphasizes the massacre of 11,000 young women: "Asquantes ki s'en eschaperent, / Ki entre paiens arriverent, / Ocises furent u vendues / U en servage retenues. / Unze mil en furent menees / E en Cologne decolees; / Urséle fu od celes prise, / E avec eles fu ocise [Some who escaped and landed amongst heathen were killed or sold or kept as slaves. Eleven thousand were led to Cologne and beheaded: Urséle was amongst those captured and was killed with them]" (*HRB* 88.394–85; *FV* 88.15–16; *RB* 6069–76).⁵⁹ Although this ending presents Britain positively, as a "birth-place of martyrs," the massacre of helpless females it entails parallels another addition Wace makes to the history of Brittany: Maximien's massacre of not only all the men but also all the women who remain in this land, an action which protects the Britons from miscegenation (*RB* 5959–64).⁶⁰ This addition reveals the poet's tendency to use female suffering as a narrative tool.

The gruesome end of Urséle and her female companions reinforces the hagiographical message that Wace has chosen to insert into Geoffrey's story about young women who die as political as well as Christian martyrs, but the violent nature of their deaths is the logical end result of a focus on female suffering that disempowers this group of Galfridian characters. They are powerless to resist their arranged marriages, powerless to withstand the storm at sea, and powerless to protest their enslavement or murder. Because the only speech Wace attributes to these young women is prayer in the midst of panic, they no longer embody a Galfridian brand of female heroism. Just as he undermines the heroism of Urséle and her companions, Wace undermines that of other Galfridian females.

Brianus's sister, who in the Vulgate version of Geoffrey's history plays the role of female hero but in the Variant version becomes a mere plot function, becomes a heroine in the *roman de Brut*. Whereas Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of this character is a female hero who makes

her brother Brianus's successful assassination of an evil magician possible and thereby contributes to the preservation of British sovereignty (*HRB* 196.391–413), Wace's version of the character (named Brien's sister) is not. More specifically, Brien's sister enters the story as a possible rape victim in need of aid: Wace's narration introduces her by saying that King Edwine "a Virecestre l'ad trovee, / A Everwic la fist mener / E en sa chambre bien garder [found her in Worcester and had her taken to York and carefully guarded in her room]" (*RB* 14152–54). Nevertheless, if readers interpret *sa chambre* as 'his room,' she becomes a victim of rape as well as of kidnapping.⁶¹

In addition, Brien's sister fades into the narrative background of the *roman de Brut* because Wace makes Brien the only active character—and therefore the only heroic one—in this story. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of events, Brianus's sister recognizes her brother, protects him by not revealing their relationship, imparts crucial information to him despite immediate danger, and attempts to escape her captor several times (*HRB* 196.394–411). Her counterpart in the *roman de Brut*, in contrast, displays passivity while her brother strategizes. In Wace's version of events (as in the Variant-redactor's), Brien recognizes his sister first, and she is serving her captor's queen by carrying a basin of water when her brother encounters her (*FV* 196.12–14; *RB* 14273–76). The brother is clearly the active character, for "Brien s'enbati en sa veie / Qu'ele le cunuisse e qu'ele le veie [Brien planted himself in her way so that she should see and know him]" (*RB* 14277–78). Although Brien's sister recognizes him (thanks to his making that task easy for her), Brien controls their interaction: he winks and tells her to pretend not to know him (*RB* 14279–82). They then kiss each other and weep before moving away from the crowd to avoid being seen (*RB* 14283–86).

In Wace's retelling, Brien's sister still gives him some information, yet the poet's vague description makes what she imparts less crucial to Brien's mission and makes her less impressive than her Galfridian counterpart; as a result, she lacks heroic qualities. Relying on the Variant-redactor's version of events, Wace says briefly, "Ele li ad tut l'estre dit / E si li ad mustré Pellit [She described all the circumstances to him and pointed out Pellit]" (*FV* 196.20–21; *RB* 14287–88). This phrasing causes her information to seem less crucial than that provided by her Galfridian counterpart, for it does not credit her with knowing anything specific about the layout of the court whereas Geoffrey's version does. This phrasing also makes her seem less impressive because the only concrete information she offers is the magician's identity. Like the Variant-redactor, Wace gives Brien's sister no further role after she points to the target (*FV* 196.21–29): as her brother leaves her, she simply feels "grant freür [very frightened]" for him

(*RB* 14294) and then disappears from the story because the poet follows the Variant version in omitting mention of her attempts to escape her captor.

Moreover, Wace underscores Brien's status as hero using word choice. Through the phrase "en la veie al devin s'est mis [and put himself in the path of the soothsayer]" (*RB* 14295), the poet credits him with locating his target. Then, through a dramatic description of the assassination, Wace enables Brien to achieve his mission with flair. Brien uses a large staff to impale the magician with so much force that the victim has no time to utter a word (14299–303). Wace even praises Brien's stealthiness: "Briens i laissa lu bastun, / Senz le bastun tut cuintement / Se traist entre la povre gent / Si qu'il ne fud aparceüz [Brien left the staff there and without it slyly slipped amongst the poor people, so that he was not noticed or recognized or suspected]" (*RB* 14304–7). In this way, Wace reduces the role of one of Geoffrey's female figures while expanding that of a male one. When Wace retells the stories of the two queen consorts from Geoffrey's history whose peace negotiations change the course of British history, he likewise makes both Gewissa and Tonwenna less impressive than their Galfridian counterparts.

In the case of Gewissa, Wace increases the amount of narrative space she occupies, developing her role as a peacemaker; however, he follows the Variant version of Geoffrey's history in reducing her impact on her husband and thus denies her the status of female hero. Wace replaces Geoffrey of Monmouth's two-line prose description of Gewissa's peace-making role with several lines of verse in which the barons make peace because of her advice and urging: "La reïne les acorda, / Genuïs, ki mult s'en pena; / Ele ert mult bien enparentee, / Kar des nobles Romains ert nee. / Pur l'enor de sun parenté / Ad tant d'ambedous parz loé / Que li baron s'entr'acorderent / E pais pristrent e pais donerent. / Vespasien ad sojorné / En Bretaine des qu'a l'esté [The queen, Genuïs, who was in great distress, reconciled them. She came from very exalted stock, because by birth she was from a noble Roman family. On the strength of her family's reputation, she gave so much advice to both sides that the barons came to terms and both accepted and offered peace. (The Roman commander) Vespasien stayed in Britain until the summer; then he returned to Rome, very joyful and happy]" (*HRB* 69.358–59; *RB* 5135–44). The details of this description give the queen's role concreteness as well as mark it as a turning point in the story. For example, Wace adds the queen's emotional distress in response to the fighting, which provides clear motivation for her actions, as well as specifies the power she possesses that enables her to achieve peace: her high social status. He also elaborates upon both the process and the outcome of the negotiation. Genuïs achieves her goal

through giving a great deal of advice to both sides, and she gives the Roman leader joy through her success as a negotiator.

Nevertheless, Wace emulates the Variant-redactor in heavily abbreviating Geoffrey's account of how Gewissa's husband Arviragus becomes a much better king after his wife's intervention (*HRB* 69.361–71; *FV* 69.15–18). As a result, Wace's Arviragus lacks the passionate love for his queen that Geoffrey's king feels: the former simply honors the peace agreement until his death, and he advances the Roman cause "pur l'amistied de la reine [through affection for the queen]" (*HRB* 68.328–30; *RB* 5151). This revision reduces the queen's impact on her husband, for he keeps his word not because she helps him to become a more honorable man but rather because of his affection for her. In this way, Wace assigns to Genuis the status of a traditional wife and queen consort who gets her man to act as she wishes through his feelings for her, not through persuasive arguments. Wace's translation of this female figure causes her to lose much of her historical significance, for she has less impact on her husband as well as less impact on her subjects than her Galfridian counterpart.

Genuis's status sinks even further for two reasons: Wace follows the Variant version in presenting her marriage as a business transaction and the queen as an object that men use to facilitate a peace agreement, and he finally strips her of the historical significance Geoffrey assigned to her. Whereas Geoffrey presents Gewissa as inspiring great passion in her new husband as well as his desire to name a city after her (*HRB* 68.328–34), Wace follows the Variant-redactor in omitting any trace of this passion: "Li messagier lur veie tindrent / E a l'entrant d'esté revindrent; / Sin amenerent Genuis, / Gente de cors, bele de vis. / A la meschine marier, / E a lur covenanz fermer, / Furent li baron de la terre / Entre Guales e Engleterre / Sur Saverne en une valee / Ki mult est riche e asazee [The messengers went on their way, and at the beginning of summer returned, bringing Genuis, fair of body and beautiful of face. For the girl's marriage and to confirm their agreement, the lords of the land were assembled on the border of England and Wales in a valley on the Severn, very rich and fertile]" (*RB* 5061–70). The visual details of this passage present Genuis as a high-value object of exchange: her value derives from her beauty of body and face, qualities which purchase peace and (as in the redaction) confirm a border. Furthermore, the brief description of her wedding confirms that what she gains as a result of her marriage is the role of queen consort, not a loving partnership in power: "Quant Genuis fu mariee, / A ses noces fu coronee [When Genuis was married, she was crowned queen at her wedding]" (*RB* 5089–90). Wace ends his description of this queen by defining her as property; the wife of Arviragus "nee esteit de lur orine [originally belonged to them (the Romans) by birth]" (*RB* 5152).

Although this queen's role as an object of exchange could have led Wace to honor Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of events by attributing the name of the city of Gloucester to Genuis, he chooses instead to explain the city's name in a way that makes Genuis a marginal figure in a story about men's power. According to Wace, there are two possible explanations of the city's name—both linked exclusively with men. The first is that the city has this name because "Claudius l'edifia [Claudius erected it]" (*RB* 5076), but the second is the one that Wace says "assez bien semble raisun [makes very good sense]" (5078): that "de Claudio fu engendrez / Uns filz illuec, Glois fu numez [Claudius begot a son there, called Glois]" (5079–80). In this way, Wace takes the Variant-redactor's preference for etymologies grounded in male names a step further by excluding the possibility that a city's name could derive from a woman's name. As a result, Wace not only domesticates this queen but also strips her of the historical significance that Geoffrey of Monmouth gave her. In the case of Geoffrey's Tonwenna, Wace does not emulate the Variant-redactor's compression of her story; instead, he develops her story so that she becomes a different character: Toruuenne.

Toruuenne plays the same intermediary role and makes essentially the same argument as her Galfridian counterpart (that Belinus has helped his brother Brennius by forcing him to seek another kingdom), but she is an emblem of physical weakness and pathos rather than a female hero. Wace's Toruuenne, like Tonwenna, is the wife of a good and law-giving king whose reign brings peace to Britain, and her intervention still leads to her sons' conquest first of France and then of Rome (*RB* 2279–2312, 2831–3152).⁶² Nevertheless, despite her receiving more narrative space in Wace's version than in Geoffrey's due to her longer speech to Brennes (*HRB* 41.126–52), Toruuenne becomes so pathetic that she elicits readers' pity rather than their respect. In Geoffrey's history, although Tonwenna bares her breasts and sobs as she speaks, thereby using emotional manipulation as well as logical arguments to persuade her younger son to make peace (*HRB* 41.131–32), she bravely asserts herself by stepping between the two armies and making the cogent argument that Brennius cannot justify this civil war (41.127–28, 41.137–47). Geoffrey describes her steps as "tremulis [trembling]" (*HRB* 41.129), but readers probably assume that this trembling results from the emotional intensity of the moment because his narration says nothing directly about her age—just that "adhuc uiuebat [she was still living at this point]" (41.127)—and describes her as "aestuabat... filium uidere quem multo tempore non aspexerat [she was agitated/burning... to see the son whom she had not beheld for a long time]" (41.128–29). Wace's Toruuenne, in contrast, enters the *roman de Brut* as an "veille [old]" woman; consequently, her hurrying to her sons

“oz vint tremblant [with a trembling step]” becomes an indicator of the physical weakness of old age rather than of strong emotion (*RB* 2713–14). Moreover, Wace’s version of the character must seek her son for quite a while before locating him, and she relies on the barons’ aid to do so; as a result, she cannot match the dramatic and powerful entrance that her Galfridian counterpart makes (*HRB* 41.129–31; *RB* 2713–16).

Torruenne becomes truly pathetic, however, when Wace elaborates upon her bare-breasted and weepy appeal to her son: “Ses vestemenz ad tuz deroz / Jesqu’a la ceinture desuz; / Ses mameles li mostra nues, / Flaistres de vieillesce e pelues. / A sun fiz parla en plorant, / Ses paroles entrerumpant, / Kar ele sangluteit sovent / E suspirout parfundement [She tore all her garments down to her belt and showed him her bare breasts, withered and hairy with age. Weeping, she spoke to her son, her words broken by frequent sobs and deep sighs]” (*RB* 2721–28). Because Torruenne strips the top half of her body instead of baring her bosom, she makes herself more vulnerable than her Galfridian counterpart—so vulnerable that she loses her dignity. Le Saux justifiably views Wace’s presentation of this female figure as “anything but dignified or respectful.”⁶³ In short, Torruenne’s withered and hairy breasts make Wace’s version of this character both pathetic and visually repulsive while his emphasis on the broken quality of her speech makes her seem weak to readers. As a result of these modifications, Torruenne begs rather than chastises her son and therefore becomes a heroine as opposed to a female hero. In the *roman de Brut*, she is passive rather than active, an object that is “useful for provoking” the actions of her sons because of her physical weakness.⁶⁴ Worse still, because Wace’s Torruenne makes a spectacle of herself, readers have to wonder whether her display of feminine weakness—rather than her arguments—convinces Brennes to make peace with his brother.

Readers are likely to conclude that Torruenne reconciles her sons through emotional manipulation instead of through logical argument, given how she encourages Brennes to feel guilt, shame, and pity. Torruenne appeals to Brennes on the basis that he has no father and an old mother, so he will never have another brother or sister (*RB* 2751–52). She is, therefore, using her old and pitiable body to guilt her son into doing as she says. In addition, unlike Geoffrey’s Tonwenna who appeals to Brennius’s sense of pride by reminding him that his exile has enabled him to gain a kingdom of his own, Wace’s Torruenne appeals to Brennes’s sense of shame (*HRB* 41.138–44). She accuses her son of attacking his friends, trying to strip his family of possessions, intending to kill his brother and force his family into exile, and attempting to destroy his homeland by bringing foreign troops to invade it (*RB* 2742–62). As she brings her

long speech to a close, the former queen consort places all the blame for the civil war on Brennes, accusing him of selfishness: “Tun frere en deiz buen gré saver / Par qui tu eüs achaisun / D’aler en autre regiu / Pur recevoir la grant honur / Dunt Dampnedeus t’at fait seinnur [You ought to be grateful to your brother, for giving you the opportunity to go to another land to receive the large domain of which God has made you lord]” (*RB* 2798–802). Furthermore, whereas according to Geoffrey the brothers embrace and make peace without prompting, for Belinus rushes to embrace and kiss his brother when he sees him approach in peace (*HRB* 41.149–52), Wace reports that they need a final dose of maternal guilt before they will reconcile: “Bels filz Brennes, que penses tu? / Met jus ta lance e tun escu / Si crei le conseil de ta mere, / Si t’acorderas a tun frere. / Pardune lui tun maltalent, / Il a tei le suen ensement [My fine son Brennes, what do you think? Put down your lance and your shield, trust your mother’s advice and be reconciled with your brother. Give up your anger against him and he will do the same to you]” (*RB* 2811–16). This twist to the plot sequence increases the dramatic tension but weakens Toruennne because she must ask her son—a second time—to end the civil war. This second request forces the mother to again urge Brennes to trust her (*RB* 2740, 2813), a detail that not only underscores the son’s lack of immediate trust in his mother but also makes readers wonder whether Brennes’s final response—“pitied en out si la creï [he pitied and trusted her]” (*RB* 2818)—reveals that his trust is never complete. Perhaps he simply responds to his mother’s manipulation.

Both the form of Toruennne’s speech and the manner in which she ends it reinforce the readers’ impression that she achieves her goal because her son pities rather than agrees with her. The great length and repetitiveness of Toruennne’s speech in Wace’s account degrade her, for they encourage readers to perceive her as an emotional female begging for peace rather than a queen demanding it. Despite her son’s resistance to her appeal, Toruennne achieves the same goal as her Galfridian counterpart: the loving embrace of her sons. The last sentence of the narration, “Issi fud la guerre achevee / E l’ire des freres finee [Thus the war was finished and the brothers’ anger brought to an end]” (*RB* 2829–30), provides closure to this episode as the sons embrace because she “l’out comandé [ordered it]” (2826). Nevertheless, the fact that Toruennne must urge her son for a third time raises further doubts about her powers of persuasion. Complicating matters further is Wace’s addition of Toruennne’s offer to Brennes that she will ensure that he receives his “dreit...pleniement [full...rights]” if he wishes to complain about his brother’s behavior (*RB* 2764–66). This offer both undermines her position (by partially validating Brennes’s grievance against Belin) and reinforces the readers’

impression that she fails to construct a logical argument. Overall, Wace's translation of Tonwenna into Toruuenne makes this queen's decrepit body a more effective means of persuasion than her speech, thereby transforming her from a female hero into a heroine.

Degrading Female Kingship through Translation

The most significant way in which Wace's process of translation undermines Galfridian historiography is that it degrades female kingship. Female kings and king-candidates occupy marginal positions in the *roman de Brut* in part because Wace stresses both the sadness and the political danger that result from having only one child, or no child at all. Consequently, he focuses more than Geoffrey does on the issue of the need for an heir. Regarding Eneas, Wace says, "Un fiz aveit k'il en mena / Ki aveit nun Ascanius; / N'aveit ne fiz ne fille plus [He had a son, called Aschanius, whom he took with him; he had no other sons or daughters]" (RB 16–18). After the deaths of the brothers Ferreus and Porreus, Wace emphasizes the lack of heir the civil war has caused: "Quant Ferreus fud morz e Porreus, / N'i out filz ne fille remés / Ne eir procein de lur lignage / Ki tenir peüst l'eritage [When Ferreus and Porreus were dead, there was no son nor daughter nor close relation from their kin who could inherit]" (RB 2181–84). However, the poet's habit of mentioning sons before daughters suggests that male heirs are more valuable to a king, as does his underscoring King Leïr's lack of a male heir: "Treis filles out, n'out nul altre eir, / Ne plus ne pout enfanz avoir [He had three daughters and no other heirs: he could not have any more children]" (RB 1669–70).⁶⁵ In short, these references to the problem of succession make it clear that females count as potential heirs, but a king with only female heirs has good reason to worry. Consistent with the concern Wace expresses about succession issues, particularly when there is only a female heir, is his diminishing both the power and historical significance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's female kings.

Guendoloena, who in *The History of the Kings of Britain* rules for fifteen years after her adulterous husband King Locrinus dies on the battlefield during their war over possession of the throne, becomes both sanitized and domesticated in the *roman de Brut*—despite Wace's enhancing her image as a ruler.⁶⁶ Although Geoffrey's Guendoloena has the same fierce temper as her father Corineus (HRB 25.58), Wace purges both her act of taking up arms against the king and her temper of their problematic potential. Given how much emphasis the translator puts on Locrin's love for his mistress both before and after he marries, the *roman de Brut* could have presented Guendoliene as a jealous female (RB 1329–33, 1381–84).

Instead, through added details, Wace's version of this story underscores the justice of Guendoliene's cause both indirectly and directly while presenting her as a competent and determined leader.⁶⁷

Indirect support for Guendoliene's cause comes in the form of Wace's expanded version of Corineus's angry chiding of the dishonorable Locrinus (*HRB* 24.32–36). The translator's Corineüs begins with a series of comments and questions, all of which brand King Locrin an idiot who lacks a sense of honor: "'Locrin,' dist il, 'put fel, put fol, / Nuls huem ne te puet guarantir / Que ja ne t'estuece morir. / As tu ma fille refusee / Que tu aveies afiee? / Que deit ço que tu ne la prenz?' ['Locrin, base wretch, vile fool,' he said, 'no one can protect you from dying on the spot. Have you refused my daughter, to whom you plighted your troth? What do you mean by not taking her?']" (*RB* 1346–51).⁶⁸ Wace then elaborates upon the king's substitution of his foreign mistress for his lawful wife and queen: "Li termes vint ki venir dut / Que Corineüs se morut, / Et Locrin, qui mais nel duta, / Guendoliene en envea / Et Hestrild ad tant enoree / Que a reïne l'ad levee [The time came, inevitably, when Corineüs died and Locrin, fearing him no longer, sent Guendoliene away and paid so much honour to Hestrild that he raised her to be queen]" (*HRB* 25.52–53; *RB* 1409–14). This passage presents Locrin as remaining in his marriage only as long as he has reason to fear his father-in-law, thereby increasing the likelihood that readers will view Guendoliene as Locrin's moral superior. However, Guendoliene then proves the justice of her cause by recruiting a broad group of supporters: she gathers "grant ost mena de Cornoaille [a great army from Cornwall]" that includes not only "ses parens [her kin]" but also "tant...estranges genz [so many...strangers]" (*RB* 1420–21). Her cause becomes more just because, unlike in Geoffrey's account, it draws supporters who do not owe her allegiance based on kinship ties (*HRB* 25.53–55).

In addition, just as Wace sanitizes Geoffrey's account of Guendoloena's coup so that it becomes unquestionably just, he transforms her one problematic trait: her temper. Although Guendoliene is "irree [angry]" at her husband's abandonment of her, Wace associates that anger with noble action: "Contre Locrin vint a bataille / Come feme fiere e seüre [She came to fight against Locrin, like a proud and resolute woman]" (*RB* 1415, 1422–23). Furthermore, Wace downplays Guendoliene's subsequent execution of Locrin's illegitimate daughter Abren and mistress Hestrild. He does so both by describing the execution briefly and simply (Guendoliene has both women thrown into the river and drowned), and by focusing the passage on how the river Avon got its name: while the execution receives two lines of coverage, the origin of the river's name receives eight (*RB* 1431–40). Wace continues to portray Guendoliene

as possessing positive traits when describing her reign: “Guendoliene fu mult fere / E mervelluse justisiere [Guendoliene was very proud, and a great dispenser of justice]” (*RB* 1441–42). In Wace’s retelling of this story, even the potential sin of pride takes on regal overtones.

Nevertheless, by altering the circumstances of her son’s succession to the throne, Wace disempowers Guendoliene and thereby domesticates her. Wace’s wording of Madan’s succession makes the new king’s mother seem less powerful—and less in control—than she is in Geoffrey’s history, for the son displaces his mother as the focus of the sentence in which the succession happens: “Dunc sout sis filz terre tenir / Sil fist de Bretaine saisir [Then her son was able to hold sway and she put him in possession of Britain]” (*RB* 1445–46). Wace’s phrasing disempowers Guendoliene because it omits not only Geoffrey’s references to the female king’s deliberate decision to give her son the throne and crowning of Maddan herself but also Geoffrey’s assertion that this woman rules over Cornwall until her death (*HRB* 26.66–68). Furthermore, the poet does not grant to this female king the contentment she has in Geoffrey’s history when she retires and reigns over Cornwall (*HRB* 26.67), and he encourages readers to define her in relation to her male relatives: “En Cornoaille reverti; / Tant ad de terre retenu / Come sis peres out ëu [She returned to Cornwall, keeping as much land as her father had had]” (*RB* 1448–50). Although she remains her father’s heir and retains possession of her patrimony, Guendoliene is still a woman whom Wace presents as much less important than her male relatives. In short, by making both Guendoliene’s son and father more prominent in her story, Wace lessens Guendoliene’s historical significance despite making her a more praiseworthy ruler than her Galfridian counterpart.

Wace’s treatment of Geoffrey’s second female king is similar to that of his first: the poet develops a fuller description of the wise and learned Marcia while ensuring that she does not pose a threat to traditional gender roles. Wace’s Marcie gains status relative to her husband because the narration in the *roman de Brut* strips her husband of specific qualities while adding details to her portrait. Although Geoffrey says of Guithelinus that he reigned “benigne et modeste [benevolently and with moderation]” until his death (*HRB* 47.257) and the Variant-redactor that he “satis modeste omni tempore uite sue rexit [ruled with adequate moderation for the whole span of his life]” (*FV* 47.1–2), Wace describes him minimally and vaguely: “Guincelins fu de bone vie [Guincelins led a good life]” (*RB* 3335). Moreover, whereas Guithelinus merits a separate sentence of description in the accounts of Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor, in Wace’s translation, he merits only this short phrase that initiates a strongly complimentary description of Marcie: “Sa moiller out num

Marcie, / Lettree fu e sage dame, / De buen pris e de bone fame [His wife was called Marcie, an educated and wise woman, much esteemed and renowned]" (*HRB* 47.256–57; *FV* 47.1–2; *RB* 3336–38).

Rephrasing the details he borrows from the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history, that this woman is noble and learned in all arts, Wace asserts her dedication to learning and her ability to write as well as read: "Sun enging mist tut e sa cure / A saveir lettre e esriture / Mult sout e mult estudia [She devoted all her intelligence and care to learning to read and write. She knew much and studied much]" (*HRB* 47.257–58; *FV* 47.2–3; *RB* 3339–41). These details give Marcie high intellectual standing. However, despite preserving his predecessors' assertion that Marcie invented a law code, Wace reduces the scope of her intellectual attainments by omitting her other inventions (*HRB* 47.258–59; *FV* 47.3–6). When dealing with this female ruler's achievements, therefore, Wace ensures that she does not pose a threat to traditional gender roles: he limits the scope of her attainments. When translating her role as a female king, however, he revises her story more thoroughly.

Wace strips Marcia of her historical significance by omitting Geoffrey's account of her reigning—until her death—over the entire island of Britain as well as raising the status of her son relative to her (*HRB* 47.264–66). Wace's narration eliminates the possibility that Marcie might function as a female king, for it defines her as nothing more than her son's regent: "Le regne, emprés la mort sun pere, / Maintint bien pur le fiz la mere / En pais e en grant quieté; / E quant li fiz fu de l'heé / Que il sout terre gouverner, / Sil fist la mere coroner. / Encor ert de bone vigur / Quant il vint a sun derain jur [His mother, after his father's death, ruled the kingdom on behalf of her son very well, in peace and great tranquility; and when her son reached the age when he knew how to govern a land, she had him crowned. He was still full of energy when his last day came]" (*RB* 3357–64). By having his Marcie rule until her son reaches his majority rather than until her death and emphasizing that she rules on her son's behalf, Wace reduces this female king to a regent just as the Variant-redactor does (*RB* 3360–62). This revision strips her of much of her historical significance. Wace also expands the brief introduction Sisillius receives in the Vulgate and Variant versions of Geoffrey's history as Marcia's seven-year-old son (*HRB* 47.262–63; *FV* 47.7–8). As a result, the translator underscores the danger of a king's having only one heir: "La reïne qui saveit tant / De Guencelin out un enfant / Ki fud apelé Sisillus, / Unches nen ourent enfant plus [The learned queen had one child by Guincelins, who was called Sisillus; after him they had no more children]" (*RB* 3349–52). This addition shifts the focus away from Marcie and toward the male heir, causing her to lose even more of the

historical significance she had in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. The female king whom Wace degrades the most, however, is Cordeilla.

By developing Cordeilla's roles as daughter, wife, and victim, Wace disempowers her more than he disempowers Marcia. When he introduces Leir's youngest daughter, Wace lessens her political significance by underscoring both the king's lack of a male heir and her beauty. Although Geoffrey, the Variant-redactor, and Wace all state that Leir has only three daughters as his heirs (*HRB* 31.137–38; *FV* 31.4–5; *RB* 1669), Wace adds, “Ne plus ne pout enfanz avoir [He could not have any more children]” (*RB* 1670)—a comment that emphasizes the lack of a male heir. Furthermore, by beginning his description of Cordeille with a detail found in neither Geoffrey's history nor its redaction, that she is “la plus bele [the most beautiful]” as well as the youngest and best-loved of Leir's daughters, Wace defines her primary value as a woman in terms of her looks while retaining Geoffrey's assertion that Cordeilla is her father's favorite (*HRB* 31.138–39; *FV* 31.5–6; *RB* 1673–74). In addition, unlike the Variant-redactor who condenses Geoffrey's account of the marriages of Leir's daughters, Wace elaborates upon it.

In keeping with his focus on the marriages of Leir's daughters, Wace presents Cordeille as a dutiful daughter who has no choice but to suffer her father's revenge and to function as a valuable possession over which her father and future husband struggle. Complementing his portrayal of the king's youngest daughter as powerless is Wace's portrayal of Leir as tyrannical. While Geoffrey's Leir declares that he will not give his youngest child a share of his kingdom but is willing to marry her to a foreign husband who does not rank as highly as the men her sisters will marry, Wace's Leir declares that Cordeille will obtain neither the tiniest scrap of land nor a husband through him, and he will never rejoice in her prosperity (*HRB* 31.165–71; *RB* 1753–72). Confronted with her father's determination to deny her the chance to marry locally, determination Wace underscores by restating the king's intention of preventing any man in the kingdom from marrying her, Cordeille is powerless to change her situation: “Cordeille, ki fu la meindre, / Ne pout faire el mais atendre [Cordeille, the youngest, could do nothing but wait]” (*RB* 1785–90). The poet then elaborates upon her powerlessness by first commenting, “Ne pout vers sun pere estriver [She could not argue with her father]” and then depicting her as helpless: she nearly faints with anger and shame at her father's scolding, and she feels great distress at her father's unjust hatred of her (*RB* 1774–75, 1792).

Having been thoroughly demeaned, Cordeille then becomes an object over which her father and future husband struggle. Because she is “e bele e gente [both beautiful and noble],” many speak of her; therefore,

King Aganippus of France hears of this much-praised unmarried lady (*RB* 1796–1800). As a result, Aganippus asks for her hand, but Wace's Leir does not send her right away despite sending word that the French king may have her—perhaps because the old king still loves Cordeille (*RB* 1801–14). This delay on Leir's part causes Aganippus to conclude that the father is withholding his daughter out of affection for her; consequently, his desire to acquire her increases, and he sends for her again (*RB* 1815–19). The situation is considerably more complicated than it is in the versions of the story that Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor create, for in them Leir says that he will be happy to send Cordeilla to the king of France, and Aganippus immediately sends for her because he is “amore uirginis inflammatus [burning with love of the maiden]” (*HRB* 31.181; *FV* 31.38–39). Wace's version of events is also potentially disturbing because the king of France appears to be as interested in acquiring what Leir wishes to retain as in the woman herself. Furthermore, once King Aganippus makes Cordeille his wife and queen, she recedes into the narrative background while he moves into the foreground.

Wace's King Aganippus overshadows Cordeille, for the poet shifts the balance of power within this royal marriage toward the husband. Whereas Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor simply state that Cordeilla marries King Aganippus, Wace suggests that Aganippus confers greatness on her: Cordeille arrives in France with nothing but the clothes she is wearing, but then she gains “grant puissance [great power]” as lady and queen of all France (*HRB* 31.184–85; *FV* 31.41–43; *RB* 1824–28). The fact that Wace chooses to include details that increase the power of Aganippus relative to Cordeille becomes evident when readers note a difference between the translator's Vulgate and Variant sources. While Geoffrey makes Cordeilla queen of only one-third of Gaul but later has Cordeilla and Aganippus give Leir “potestatem totius Galliae [power over all of Gaul],” an inconsistency which results in the royal couple's conferring more power on Cordeilla's father than she received through marrying Aganippus (*HRB* 31.183, 31.248), the Variant-redactor resolves the inconsistency regarding what Aganippus possesses. His Cordeilla still acts with her husband to put the entire French realm under Leir's control until he regains the British throne, but his version of events states clearly that Aganippus controls all of France (*FV* 31.33–35, 31.92–93).

Wace, in contrast to the Variant-redactor, attributes political power only to Aganippus. Unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth who states that Cordeilla and Aganippus “honorifice susceperunt illum dederuntque ei potestatem totius Galliae donec eum in pristinam dignitatem restaurassent [received (Leir) honorably and gave to him power over all of France until they could restore him to his former glory]” (*HRB* 31.247–49) or

the Variant-redactor who credits the “rex et regina [king and queen]” with the same actions (*FV* 31.91–93), Wace has the king and queen greet Leïr honorably but then has Aganippus alone receive his father-in-law before “par tut sun regne fist mander / E a ses humes comander [he commanded his men and proclaimed throughout his kingdom]” that all will serve Leïr until the king of Britain regains his realm (*RB* 2021–22). This phrasing not only makes Aganippus’s reception of his father-in-law more important than the initial greeting that he and his wife offer to Leïr, but also makes King Aganippus the active figure in conferring power on the old king: it is Aganippus who issues orders to all those of political note, and it is he alone who has the power to proclaim his father-in-law to be regent (*HRB* 31.246–49; *FV* 31.92–93; *RB* 2019–28). Thus, Wace underscores the difference between the king’s primary role and the queen consort’s clearly secondary one. Even when Cordeïlle becomes a female king, Wace continues to alter the details of her story so that she possesses less power than her Galfridian counterpart.

Through Wace’s translation of his Latin sources, he weakens Cordeïlla as a character in two ways: first he brings her status as a female king into question, and then he has her die as a helpless and foolish victim of her nephews’ cruelty. Although Wace presents her reign as “a continuation of Leir’s,” his choice of following the Variant-redactor’s order of events entails the undermining of her status as an independent ruler.⁶⁹ In contrast to Geoffrey of Monmouth who states clearly that both King Leir and King Aganippus die before Cordeïlla reigns alone as a female king, Wace complicates matters. He states that Leïr dies and Cordeïlle buries her father before ruling for five years, but then adds, “Mais ja ert vedve senz seinnor [But now she was a widow, without a husband]” (*RB* 2052). By mentioning Aganippus’s death at this point in the story, Wace creates the possibility that Cordeïlle and her husband rule Britain together for five years. If husband and wife do rule together, then Wace’s version of the plot sequence in which Aganippus collects the troops that Leïr takes with him to Britain takes on a new meaning: Aganippus views his wife’s interests as inseparable from his own (*HRB* 31.252–54). In that case, when Aganippus sends the fleet he has assembled, along with his wife, to Leïr “qui emprés lui sun regne eüst [so that she could inherit the kingdom after Leïr]” (*RB* 2036), the king of France is helping his wife to acquire power that Aganippus will wield with her.

Cordeïlle’s power erodes further when Wace explains how she loses the throne. Making the same choice as the Variant-redactor, Wace omits Geoffrey’s description of how Gonorille and Ragau’s sons rebel against their aunt because they are dissatisfied with having a woman ruler; as a result, the poet can attribute her loss of the throne to her lack of military

and personal strength (*HRB* 32.264–66; *FV* 32.3–4). Wace simplifies the political situation by describing Cordeille's nephews as hating their aunt because she possesses the realm, thereby transforming their rebellion into a straightforward snatching of power (*RB* 2057). Developing her portrait as a helpless victim is the fact that Wace's version of the story identifies the death of Aganippus, and his wife's subsequent lack of a male protector, as the trigger for the rebellion as well as the cause of its success. Wace then completes his portrait of female victimhood by denying Cordeille a dignified death: he has her kill herself "de marrement [from sorrow]" (*RB* 2066), without including Geoffrey's assertion that this sorrow results from her loss of political power (*HRB* 32.269–70). Making matters worse for this female king, Wace presents the suicide as a direct result of her nephews' imprisoning her for a long time; therefore, readers are likely to assume that Leir's daughter simply despairs (*RB* 2063–65). Finally, having already reduced Geoffrey's proud and competent female king to a queen consort incapable of running Britain without a husband's aid and protection, he labels Cordeille's suicide as "si fist que fole [a foolish deed]" (*RB* 2066). By doing so, Wace completes the process of transforming Geoffrey's strong and wise Cordeilla into a weak and foolish female. It is through translating the concept of the female king-candidate, however, that the poet completes his degradation of female kingship in the *roman de Brut*.

Wace's version of Helena, daughter of King Coel and mother of King Constantinus, gains historical significance that she does not possess in *The History of the Kings of Britain*; nevertheless, she loses the historical significance Geoffrey attributed to her because her roles as queen consort and king's mother overshadow her status as king-candidate. Wace gives his Eleine added historical significance by inserting an episode that does not appear in either Geoffrey of Monmouth's or the Variant-redactor's accounts—one in which Eleine plays a role that changes Christian history.⁷⁰ In this episode, Eleine finds the True Cross: "E Eleine, sa bone mere, / En Jerusalem trespassa, / Tuz les vielz Judeus assembla, / Si fu par li la croiz trovee / Ki lunges out esté celee [And his good mother, Eleine, travelled to Jerusalem and collected together all the old Jews; thus through her was the Cross found, which had long been hidden]" (*RB* 5720–24). By presenting Eleine as traveling to the Holy Land, working with Jewish wise men, and making possible the recovery of the greatest of Christian treasures, Wace gives her a place in Christian history that she does not possess in either of his main source texts. Nevertheless, the discovery of the True Cross takes place during the reign of Eleine's son and supports Wace's characterization of her as Constantin's "bone mere [good mother]" (*RB* 5720). Because Wace departs further than the

Variant-redactor from Geoffrey's version of events, this traditional female role displaces her potential reign.

Wace begins his story by assigning to Eleine the same attributes that Geoffrey does, but he develops it in ways that associate her with queenship rather than kingship. Just as Geoffrey notes that Helena receives an education appropriate for a future ruler as well as that she is beautiful (*HRB* 78.136–43), Wace says that Eleine is both “bien lettree / E de belté assez loe [well educated and celebrated for her beauty]” (*RB* 5609–10) and defines her education as preparation for female rule: “Mult la fist Choël bien aprendre / E mult i fist maistres entendre, / Pur ço que quant li reis morust / Le regne après tenir seüst [Choël had her well taught and had tutors to pay her the greatest attention, so that when the king died she should be able to govern the kingdom]” (5611–14). However, because the poet follows the First Variant in omitting Geoffrey's second assertion of this woman's hereditary right to the British throne (*HRB* 83.291–93; *FV* 83.1–2), he can focus the rest of the story on her roles as queen consort and king's mother. Wace underscores the fact that Eleine is not a female king by saying of her husband, “E Constainz prist sa fille Eleine / Si tint la terre en sun demeine [And Constainz took (Choël's) daughter Eleine to wife and took possession of her land]” (*RB* 5653–54).

Having already emphasized her role as queen consort (*RB* 5658), Wace then gives the greatest narrative weight to Eleine's role as King Constantin's mother. Assigning to this educated woman a new but more traditional function, first Wace states that she and her husband both “mult l'amerent / E del bien nurrir se penerent [loved (Constantin) dearly, and took pains over his upbringing]” (*RB* 5661–62); then he asserts that, after her husband's death, “la mere le doctrina; / Qui mielz l'amout, mielz l'enseina [his mother taught him; since she loved him most, she instructed him most]” (*RB* 5671–72). By inserting these details about how Eleine educates her son, Wace transforms an education that Geoffrey defined as enabling a woman to reign as a female king into the means through which that woman fulfills her duties as a mother and prepares her son to be king. As a result, Eleine becomes the ideal queen consort who supports first her husband's and then her son's reign. Finally, Wace is careful to praise Eleine in relation only to other women: “De sa valor ne de sun sens, / Ne saveit l'om feme en sun tens / Ne de sun pris nule meschine [There was no woman of her time to equal her for excellence or wisdom, nor any girl for renown]” (*RB* 5655–57). Clearly, Wace's Eleine does not challenge the hegemony of either her husband or her son: she is a woman of “renown” whose wisdom benefits her beloved son.

When Wace translates the story of Geoffrey's other female king-candidate, Octavius's daughter, he emphasizes the father's intention

that his daughter reign; however, he begins by eliminating the possibility of her ruling alone and ends by completing the process the Variant-redactor began: making her husband's acquisition of the throne seem natural. The basic plot remains the same as in Geoffrey's history and its redaction in that an aging king tries to achieve lasting peace through marrying his daughter to the right man (*HRB* 81.196–201; *FV* 81.1–9). Nevertheless, Wace makes explicit what remains implicit in Geoffrey's version of the story: "Une fille aveit si vulsist / Que le regne emprés lui tenist [He had a daughter and wanted her to reign after him]" (*RB* 5807–08). This addition has the potential to enhance her power, but the poet then adds information that produces the opposite result: whether she marries Maximien or another nobleman, she is merely a conduit through which her father will transfer power to a son-in-law. If she marries Maximien, then he becomes Octaves's heir, and she exercises power as Maximien's queen consort: "Dunt li li reis sa fille a feme / E eir le face de sun regne, / Si sera sa fille reïne / E tut a lui la terre acline [The king should give him his daughter in marriage and make him heir to his realm; thus, she would become queen and the land would be entirely subject to her]" (*RB* 5831–34). If Octaves declares his nephew Cunan the heir to the throne and gives his daughter in marriage to another nobleman, then her father "sis mariz desraisnier vuldreit / Que l'erité aveir devreit [(i)s establishing her husband's right to have the inheritance for himself]" (*RB* 5837–38). In short, if married to Maximien, this woman's exercise of power is contingent on her husband's possession of it and, if married to a nobleman who is not her father's heir, her husband would likely attack Cunan in order to pursue his right to the throne.

Octaves's daughter then becomes even further removed from the exercise of political power when Wace follows the Variant-redactor in compressing and simplifying the plot so that Maximien simply accepts the throne that King Octaves offers to him (*FV* 82.1–2; *RB* 5865–72). In addition, Wace completes the process of naturalizing Maximien's accession to the throne by adding details that emphasize the ease with which the king's messenger achieves his goal of convincing Maximien to accept the king's invitation to succeed him. First the poet expands upon the fact that Maximianus accepts the offer "letus [joyfully]" so that Maximien's delight is evident, and his reaction becomes natural: "S'il out joie, ne m'en merveil [his joy is no surprise]" or, more literally, "[his joy does not surprise me]" (*FV* 82.1; *RB* 5865, 5867). Then Wace adds a detail about Maximien's behavior, that "ne fist mie lung apareil [his preparations were not lengthy]"; consequently, the male king-candidate's response becomes automatic (*RB* 5868). Using these details, Wace clears Maximien's path to the British throne of obstacles. However, by smoothing out the

transition between the reigns of Octaves and Maximien, Wace disempowers Octaves's daughter and makes the overriding of her hereditary right to the British throne seem both appropriate and natural.

Wace's manner of translating this story confirms that, although he develops the roles of Galfridian females, he generally grants them less political power and historical significance than Geoffrey does. As a result, female figures in the *roman de Brut* conform to traditional gender roles while their Galfridian counterparts do not. In addition, Wace's aggressive moralizing and complete degradation of female kingship suggest that this translator recognized but rejected the very elements that cause *The History of the Kings of Britain* to violate the norms of medieval historiography: its nonjudgmental, secular approach to narration and its creation of female figures—three female kings among them—that prepared Norman readers for Empress Matilda's reign as king of England.

CHAPTER 4

DELEGITIMIZING AND ERASING FEMALE KINGSHIP IN THE “EPISTOLA WARINO BRITONI,” THE *CHRONICA MAJORA*, AND LAȜAMON’S *BRUT*

Soon after Geoffrey completed his *Historia regum Britanniae*, two clerks with ecclesiastical sensibilities undermined his feminist version of the early British past: first the anonymous redactor of the text now known as the First Variant, and then the poet Wace. However, as Geoffrey’s account of the early British past became part of the standard account of insular history, it suffered much greater distortion. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, two more redactors altered the content of *The History of the Kings of Britain* to a much greater extent than the anonymous Variant-redactor had done. First Henry of Huntingdon, in the “Epistola Warino Britoni” that he appended to his *Historia Anglorum*, and then Matthew Paris in his *Chronica majora* forced Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of the past into conformity with traditional, Bedan historiography. This action on their part is consistent with what is known about their careers: Henry of Huntingdon’s role as archdeacon of Huntingdon was to ensure uniformity of message throughout his diocese, and Matthew Paris’s role was to serve the Benedictine community of Saint Albans by compiling a comprehensive history that teaches moral lessons through its exempla.¹

As a work of literature, too, Geoffrey’s version of early British history suffered major distortion when LaȜamon translated Wace’s *roman de Brut* into English verse and, in the process, dismantled the Galfridian presentation of female figures to which he had access through both the Latin text and Wace’s translation of it into Anglo-Norman French. Although Henry of Huntingdon’s and Matthew Paris’s redactions condense the Galfridian account of early British rulers while LaȜamon’s translation

expands it, all three men assert misogynist ideas that delegitimize or simply erase the concept of female kingship.

Henry of Huntingdon's "Letter to Warin the Breton": Dismantling Feminist Historiography through Redaction

Henry of Huntingdon's "Letter to Warin the Breton" is a summary of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* that departs from its source text in part because Henry attempts to reconcile it with other histories, and in part because of "his own literary and historiographical ends."² Henry obtained access to Geoffrey's history at the abbey of Le Bec in January 1139, but he chose to alter what was, for him, a new source of information about the British past in order to reconcile it with his *History of the English* rather than alter his own account to accommodate the work of a rival historian. This decision is significant given that Henry was not averse to editing his work: he eventually produced six versions of his history. More importantly, however, his redaction of Geoffrey's account of early Britain takes the form of a letter that "drastically" abbreviates its source, omitting "much of the Arthurian detail" as well as many of the dramatic plot sequences and speeches in the history as a whole.³ By inserting quotations from the Bible and classical sources, speeches of his own creation, and his own narratorial comments into Geoffrey's narrative, Henry greatly distorts his source text despite preserving its basic structure: a king-list that the stories of selected rulers interrupt.⁴ Furthermore, his redaction pushes female figures into the margins of early British history, for it mentions only three historical women (Deborah, Cleopatra, and Empress Matilda).⁵ What Henry effects, then, is a dismantling of Geoffrey's feminist version of the British past: "The Letter to Warin" constitutes a separate work of historiography in which the archdeacon reinforces traditional gender roles by reducing to footnote status or eliminating many of Geoffrey of Monmouth's female figures as well as omitting or transforming Geoffrey's female kings.

Early in "The Letter to Warin," the archdeacon reduces to footnote status or simply eliminates several of Geoffrey's female figures. Brutus's mother, who in Geoffrey's history is a niece of Lavinia who (following a secret love affair with Silvius) marries him and conceives Brutus, becomes a footnote to the abbreviated version of events: she receives passing mention as the woman who dies in childbirth as soothsayers predicted (*HRB* 6.54–61; *EWB* 2.558–59). In a similar manner, Henry condenses Geoffrey's detailed story about the goddess Diana's powers and Brutus's worship of her so that Diana becomes merely the source of the prophecy

that Brutus will find a new homeland on the island of Albion (*HRB* 16.280–17.318; *EWB* 2.560–61). However, Geoffrey's Innogin, the wife of Brutus whom he comforts as she mourns the loss of her homeland, simply does not appear in Henry's summary (*HRB* 15.270–16.275). Her absence is all the more noteworthy given that the archdeacon credits Brutus with quickly clearing Albion of giants, founding Britain in his own name, and leaving a son named Lucrinus (Geoffrey's Locrinus) to rule after him (*EWB* 2.560–61). Another noteworthy absence is that of Marcia who, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, rules all of Britain from the time of her husband's death until her own death because she is a learned and sensible person (*HRB* 47.257–65). In "The Letter to Warin," in contrast, there is an unbroken line of male kings that includes the figures Geoffrey identifies as Marcia's husband and son, but not Marcia (*EWB* 5.568–69). She has disappeared from history as Henry of Huntingdon recounts it: her contributions—the law code King Alfred translated into English, many other inventions, and effective kingship—no longer exist.

In the case of Guendoloena, Geoffrey's first female king, Henry transforms a character that leads troops against her adulterous husband—but does not kill him herself—and then reigns competently for fifteen years into Gondolouea, a cold-blooded murderer with a stereotypically feminine motive (*HRB* 25.53–26.65). Henry's tendency to moralize causes him to present the death of King Lucrinus as just, and the king's adultery as a sin: "Puniuit igitur Gondolouea crimen adulterii in uiro suo, quod perpetrauerat in ancilla ipsius Gondolouee [Therefore, Gondolouea punished the sin of adultery of her husband, which he had committed on Gondolouea's maidservant]" (*EWB* 2.560–61). Instead of interpreting the adulterer's death as fulfilling God's will, however, Henry emphasizes the queen's murderous act by assigning to Gondolouea only one defining characteristic: she is a regicide. Henry's account of this woman's reign contrasts the legitimacy of Lucrinus's exercise of authority with the brutality of his wife's act: "Cum decem annis potentissime regnasset, uxor sua Gondolouea occidit in bello sagitta [When he had reigned with the greatest authority, his wife Gondolouea murdered him with an arrow in battle]" (*EWB* 2.560–61). In this way, the archdeacon's redaction of *The History of the Kings of Britain* changes the plot of Geoffrey's story so that Britain's first female king shoots the fatal arrow herself. This change makes it possible for Henry to end the story by defining Gondolouea as a murderous usurper rather than a legitimate ruler: "Gondolouea, post interfectionem uiri sui, regnauit quindecim annis, tempore Samuelis et Homeri [Gondolouea, after slaughtering her husband, reigned for fifteen years, in the time of Samuel and Homer]" (*EWB* 2.560–61).

Having transformed a Galfridian death in battle into a cold-blooded murder, Henry of Huntingdon then omits the deaths of Lucrinus's mistress and daughter in order to provide a motive for the regicide that transforms Geoffrey's bold and morally superior Guendoloena into her opposite: a woman shamed by a petty domestic squabble, and scorned by a husband who chooses a more attractive woman (*HRB* 25.53–57). According to "The Letter to Warin," Gondolouea murders Lucrinus with an arrow "quia eam dimiserat [because he had cast her aside]" for a maidservant "qua non erat forma uenustior, uisu delectabilior [than whom there was none more beautiful in appearance or more alluring as a sight]" (*EWB* 2.560–61). By transforming a German princess whose illegitimate daughter threatens the purity of the Briton bloodline into a nameless mistress who serves in the royal household, the archdeacon reduces the scale of the conflict from that of dominion over the island to that of the king's preference for a particular sexual partner, thereby distancing Gondolouea from political matters. In addition, changing the identity of the king's mistress entails a change in plot: the king's adultery now has a clear and perhaps understandable motive: the superior beauty and allure of the maidservant. Finally, the petty and domestic nature of the power struggle in which Gondolouea engages makes her regicide seem less justified than it is in Geoffrey's history: it is merely revenge for a personal affront. Gondolouea's role as a woman scorned receives further emphasis when Henry states that Lucrinus had made his mistress his new queen after "expulsa domina sua [her lady had been driven out]" (*EWB* 2.560–61). Having reshaped Guendoloena's story to his satisfaction, Henry of Huntingdon simply omits Locrinus's illegitimate daughter Habren who, in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, gains immortality through giving her name to the River Severn (*HRB* 25.58–64). Apparently, Henry saw the daughter as an unnecessary complication in Geoffrey's plot.

The "Letter to Warin" version of the story of Leir and his daughters transforms Regau and Gonorilla into true villains while making Cordeilla more heroic, but less kingly, than her Galfridian counterpart. Although Henry of Huntingdon does not include the names of the two older sisters, he makes his Regau character repulsive when she responds to Leir's request for a declaration of love with blasphemous dishonesty: she uses a quotation from Proverbs to deceive him.⁶ Moreover, both she and Gonorilla become monstrous when they mastermind their father's overthrow: "Filie regis in Britannia degentes promouerunt maritos suos ut patrem, quia diutius desiderato uiuebat, regno expellerent [The daughters of the king, having bided their time in Britain, pushed their husbands onward so that they would expel their father—because he had

lived longer than they wished—from the kingdom]” (*EWB* 3.564–65). According to the archdeacon, the two daughters’ actions prove them to be both manipulative and lacking in natural feeling for their father. As a result, his redaction shifts the blame for the rebellion from Leir’s sons-in-law to his daughters (*HRB* 31.186–87). King Leir’s words to Cordeilla then reinforce the message that her sisters overthrew him: he declares, “Sorores tue...regno me crudeles expulerunt [Your sisters...inhumanly drove me out of the kingdom]” and then notes their “crudelibus gestis [inhuman deeds]” a second time in the same sentence (*EWB* 3.564–65).

In contrast to her monstrous sisters, Henry of Huntingdon’s Cordeilla becomes more heroic than her Galfridian counterpart. Unlike Geoffrey’s account in which Cordeilla accompanies her father as he defeats his sons-in-law on the battlefield, Henry’s account presents Cordeilla leading troops either alone or with her husband (*HRB* 31.252–54). Having married Aganippus after God had spurred the French king to seek her hand, she goes to Britain with her husband, “ducesque sceleratos debellans et interficiens, regno patrem triumphose restituit [and, (after) vanquishing and killing the wicked dukes, she restored her father to the kingdom triumphantly]” (*EWB* 3.564–65). Although the grammar of the Latin sentence leaves open the question of whether the husband and wife do the vanquishing together or the wife does it alone, Cordeilla becomes more heroic than her Galfridian counterpart because she plays a military role.⁷ She then becomes even more heroic through the archdeacon’s description of her death: “Se ipsam uiriliter peremit [She killed herself with manly vigor]” (*EWB* 3.564–65). Nevertheless, this heroic death transforms Cordeilla into a virago and, by doing so, undermines her status as a female king. Subsequent events then continue to undermine it. First, because Henry states that Aganippus campaigns with his wife to restore Leir to the throne but fails to mention Aganippus’s death when noting Leir’s, it is possible that Cordeilla’s husband remains alive and reigns with her (*EWB* 3.564–65). Second, even if readers take the statement that “regnauit Cordeilla post patrem quinque annis [Cordeilla reigned after her father for five years]” as meaning that she ruled alone, her nephews’ rebelling “iniurias patrum uindicaturi [to avenge the wrongs done to their fathers]” justifies their action (*EWB* 3.564–65). As a result, Henry’s story of Cordeilla undermines the idea of female kingship in two ways: it presents her as an exceptional woman, a virago, and it raises doubts not only about her reigning alone but also about the legitimacy of her reign.

Although readers can discover little about the remaining female figures in “The Letter to Warin,” it is worth noting that Henry of Huntingdon

reduces Geoffrey's queens to mere footnotes to the deeds of males. For example, the sister of King Peanda of Mercia receives mention as the mother of King Cadualadrus, but Henry omits details about her lineage and marriage (*HRB* 202.516–19; *EWB* 10.582–83). Iudon, who in Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* affects the course of British history, receives only the briefest of mentions as a murderer, and an indirect mention at that: "Porrex occidit fratrem suum Ferrex. Quem etiam mater eorum occidit [Porrex killed his brother Ferrex. Him (Porrex) their mother likewise killed]" (*EWB* 3.566–67). Then, although Henry allots a great deal of narrative space to the nameless "puella [girl]" over whom the king of the Danes, Belinus, and Brennius all struggle for possession, Tonwenna (mother of Belinus and Brennius) has no name in Henry's account and receives only an indirect mention: "Maternis lacrimis permotus, concordatus est [Moved deeply by maternal tears, he reconciled]" with his brother Belinus (*EWB* 4.566–69). For the archdeacon, female figures that function as men's love objects merit more narrative space than ones that intervene in political events, and such interventions can occur only through emotional appeals.

Other female figures play only minor roles in this rewriting of the Galfridian past. Predictably, when Archdeacon Henry deals with Geoffrey's two female king-candidates, he does not identify them as their father's heirs. Helena becomes merely the wife of Constantius, and King Octavius's daughter merely a possession transferred from Octavius to his son-in-law when the king gives him "filiam et regnum [daughter and kingdom]" (*EWB* 8.574–75). In a similar fashion, Henry mentions only in passing events on which Geoffrey of Monmouth dwells: the poisoning of Vortimerius "per nouercam [by his stepmother]" Ronwein (whom the archdeacon does not bother to name) and Uther's marriage to Igera, who in "The Letter to Warin" becomes just the woman upon whom the king begets Arturus and Anna (*EWB* 8.576–79). In addition, Henry omits both Ganhumara's name and her function as co-regent with Modredus with the result that Modredus is the active character in this plot sequence (*EWB* 9.578–79). Instead of wielding political power with her nephew, Arturus's queen is a possession that the king leaves in Modredus's custody when he begins his campaign to conquer Rome (*EWB* 9.578–79). This historian assigns to Ganhumara neither actions nor emotions.

With only one exception, Henry of Huntingdon's "The Letter to Warin" either pushes Galfridian females into the margins of an account of male kingship or eliminates their roles altogether. Moreover, the only female character to function as a king, Cordeilla, acquires heroic traits but loses not only her womanhood but also her definite and fully legitimate

possession of the British throne. Through its systematic distortion of its source text, “The Letter to Warin” dismantles the feminist historiography that Geoffrey of Monmouth created.

Matthew Paris as Redactor: Erasing Female Kingship

Although the Variant-redactor subtly but systematically undermines Geoffrey of Monmouth’s feminist version of early British history while preserving almost all of the original narrative, the thirteenth-century Benedictine monk Matthew Paris dismantles Geoffrey’s version of the past despite interpolating selections from *The History of the Kings of Britain* into his *Major History*. Unlike modern historians who tend to view Geoffrey’s history as problematically nonfactual, Paris treats *The History of the Kings of Britain* as a legitimate source of historical information: he inserts many of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s female figures into his *Major History* without bracketing them as legendary.⁸ Nevertheless, Paris alters Geoffrey’s stories of female figures so that they reinforce the traditional ideas about gender roles that his monastic social context encouraged. Paris composed *The Major History* during a period of activity from about 1240 to about 1259. Because his abbey of Saint Albans was an important cultural and economic center, he was well versed in the politics of his day, including the struggles between King Henry III and the barons.⁹ However, as a monastic historian composing a universal history, Paris’s priorities are to teach readers moral lessons, to situate all events “within the broader context of human history and its place within a divine plan of creation,” and to provide evidence of God’s hand in earthly events while recording both the good and evil deeds of his contemporaries—including people within and connected to his monastic community.¹⁰

Because Matthew Paris views history as “a matter of moral instruction, a practical science beneficial to the earthly and celestial well-being of God’s people,” he is more interested in categorizing figures according to their morality than in distinguishing between legendary and historical women.¹¹ As a result, his *Major History* counters the cultural work that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history performs: assigning pivotal roles to female figures, and using some of those figures to provide models of moral and effective kingship. Paris uses female figures as historicized models of sin and virtue that either reflect or contrast with male figures, thereby relegating Galfridian females to the margins of his narrative. This usage of female figures sharply limits the scope of their roles and erases the kingship of Guendoloena and Marcia. Furthermore, instead of giving female figures access to male roles, Matthew Paris treats both legendary

and historical queens the same: he fits them into an Eve/Mary paradigm, thus precluding their individuation. Within this restrictive conceptual framework, Queen Ganhumara, Empress Matilda, and Eleanor of Aquitaine all lose their political agency.

Paris's method of redacting *The History of the Kings of Britain* causes female figures to recede into the narrative background. For example, when Paris borrows Geoffrey's account of the first king of Britain, he omits his source's foundational example of an emotional bond between a royal husband and wife: that between Brutus and Innogin. *The Major History* omits the interaction in which Brutus comforts Innogin as she grieves the loss of her father and homeland, an interaction that fleshes out Innogin as a character, establishes Brutus's marriage to her as involving genuine caring and affection, and insists on a model of male heroism that includes loving, nurturing behavior as well as competence on the battlefield (*HRB* 15.270–75; *CM* 1:19). Paris likewise abbreviates the Galfridian account of how King Octavius uses his daughter's marriage to confer the kingship of Britain on her husband. As the monastic historian does so, however, he underscores the king's lack of a male heir instead of developing the daughter as a character: "Qui unicam tantum habens filiam, masculina prole carebat [He (Octavius) having only a single daughter, lacked male progeny]" (*CM* 1:168). Therefore, like the Variant-redactor, Paris nearly eliminates this female king-candidate.

Achieving what he likely considered to be a systematic correction of his source, this redactor domesticates both the other female king-candidate and the female kings that Geoffrey of Monmouth created. For example, Paris repackages the education of Coel's daughter Helena so that it becomes consistent with traditional female roles, shifting the narrative focus away from Geoffrey's main point that Helena's education was king-training. Paris's Helena has a talent for music and an education in the liberal arts, but that aristocratic education acquires a new, traditional significance in *The Major History*. This education gives Helena ladylike skills that make her a trophy wife for Constantius: "Deinde Constantius, regni diadema adeptus, Helenam Coel regis filiam, virginem valde speciosam, artibusque liberalibus et instrumentis musicis ad perfectum eruditam, in societatem thori recepit [Then Constantius, having obtained the crown of the realm, received into the union of the marriage bed Helena daughter of Coel, a maiden who was very beautiful and learned to perfection in the liberal arts and musical instruments]" (*CM* 1:148). Paris's redaction highlights the transfer of power from a father to his son-in-law through the "marriage bed" as well as the benefit Constantius receives in the form of a beautiful and well-educated wife.

Marcia, a figure that Geoffrey presents as the creator of her country's law code and a woman who rules Britain alone between the time of her husband's death and her own passing, gets domesticated in a similar manner. Paris retains her authorship of the law code: "Erat autem ei mulier nobilis Martia nomine, omnibus artibus erudita, quae etiam legem, quam Britones Martiam appellant, invenit [Moreover, (Sisillius's) mother called Marcia, learned in all arts, also invented the law, which the Britons call Marcian]" (*CM* 1:60). Nevertheless, Marcia becomes merely the wife of one king and the mother of the next in *The Major History* because Paris, after noting King Alfred's translation of the law code into the English language, immediately moves on to the death of King Guithelinus and the reign of his son Sisillius (*CM* 1:60). In this way, Paris eliminates any trace of Marcia's kingship and focuses instead on presenting the reigns of her husband and son.

The Major History erases Guendoloena's reign from the Galfridian account of the British past just as completely as it erases Marcia's. Guendoloena's role as a female king disappears when this historian transitions seamlessly from the reign of Guendoloena's husband Locrinus to that of her son Maddan (*CM* 1:24). Given that Paris carefully preserves almost all of the details of this story, his omission of Guendoloena's reign is all the more conspicuous. Faithfully reproducing Geoffrey's account, Paris describes how Locrinus falls in love with Estrildis, marries Guendoloena under pressure from her father Corineus, carries on an extramarital affair with Estrildis by lodging her in an underground cave, begets a daughter on Estrildis and a son on Guendoloena, and then makes Estrildis his queen once his father-in-law is safely dead (*CM* 1:24). Paris then continues to replicate Geoffrey's story, repeating the details that Guendoloena—"indignans [scorning/resenting]" her husband's replacement of her with his mistress—gathers troops in Cornwall and then attacks Locrinus, who dies in the battle (*CM* 1:24). After Locrinus's death, however, the redactor presents Guendoloena's revenge rather than her reign. Paris repeats Geoffrey's description of her "paterna furens insania [raging with paternal extravagance]" and then drowning both Estrildis and Estrildis's daughter Habren, an action that honors Locrinus's memory through the river named after his illegitimate child (*HRB* 25.58; *CM* 1:24). Nevertheless, by omitting any mention of Guendoloena's reign, Paris transforms her story into that of a woman scorned who takes her revenge but honors the name of her adulterous husband as she does so. Matthew Paris was willing to obliterate fifteen years of Geoffrey of Monmouth's timeline in order to avoid including the reign of this female king.

Paris chooses to preserve the reign of one of Geoffrey's female kings, Cordeilla; nevertheless, his condensed version of the story of Leir and

his daughters reinforces two misogynist assumptions about women: that most women are dishonest and cruel, and that a female king cannot wield political power effectively. Paris pares down Geoffrey's story, with the result that King Leir becomes the dominant character and his daughters recede into the narrative background. Unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth who develops the relationships between Leir and his daughters and describes the actions of the three daughters in detail, Paris focuses on Leir's actions and reactions (*HRB* 31.134–259). The first part of Paris's version of the story recounts Leir's awkward situation and the disposition of his property: it opens with the statement that because Leir has no son, only “tres filias [three daughters],” he sets about dividing his kingdom among them and marrying them honorably (*CM* 1:31). Like *The History of the Kings of Britain*, the redaction presents King Leir as testing all three daughters' love for him (*HRB* 31.140–43; *CM* 1.31). The redaction then departs from its source, however, by not only omitting the names of Gonorilla and Regau but also summarizing in a single phrase the two older daughters' declarations that they love their father more than they love themselves (*CM* 1:31). As a result, Paris's version of this story focuses on how Cordeilla angers her father with her declaration, which the redactor condenses but presents in direct speech, that she loves him as much as he has property to bestow (*CM* 1:31). With these harsh-sounding words comprising her entrance into *The Major History*, Cordeilla remains more honest than her sisters, but she does not behave like the beloved child of the king who returns his great love. As a result, readers might construe her either as a grasping female, or as a woman who insults her father by daring to articulate her desire for property as a man would.

Paris's retelling of this story continues to present Cordeilla as a problematic daughter. When paraphrasing Leir's angry declaration in Geoffrey's history that Cordeilla will receive no part of the kingdom, Paris makes the king's anger a direct result of his daughter's implicit insult (*HRB* 31.165–71; *CM* 1:31). The tension between father and daughter remains palpable as Leir marries off his two elder daughters to the dukes of Cornwall and Albany but gives Cordeilla to Aganippus, king of the French, “sine terra, pecunia, auro, et argento [without land, money, gold, and silver],” as in Geoffrey's account (*HRB* 31.179; *CM* 1:31). However, by compressing his source once again, Paris transforms its explanation of how Leir will send Cordeilla to her husband without money because the king has already divided all his “auro et argento [gold and silver]” between his other daughters into a list of all the possessions that he denies to his youngest daughter (*CM* 1:31). Through the opening sequence of his redaction of this story, Paris defines Leir's elder daughters as a means

of transferring the king's property to their husbands and denies them even the basis of an identity—a name—while presenting Cordeilla as a problematic rather than beloved daughter.

This redaction also diminishes the roles of Leir's two elder daughters, presenting them as cruel in their treatment of their father but irrelevant to their husbands' rebellion. Without bothering to develop Cordeilla's relationship with her husband as his source does, Paris moves immediately to the rebellion of the dukes against their father-in-law and borrows Geoffrey's phrasing to describe it (*HRB* 31.175–89; *CM* 1:31–32). Because Gonorilla and Regau receive no mention, they are political nonentities. Nevertheless, Geoffrey's elaborate plot sequence in which Gonorilla and Regau reduce the size of their father's retinue in response to the rowdiness of his men becomes a straightforward report of what appears to be wanton disrespect and cruelty on the part of these daughters (*HRB* 31.189–200). In Paris's account, Cordeilla's unfeeling sisters dismiss their father as “senem...delirum, et mendicum [old,...crazy, and beggarly]” and respond angrily to his request to retain forty men: he may retain only one man because he is unworthy of any greater service (*CM* 1:32).¹² As a result of Paris's editing, therefore, Gonorilla and Regau lose political significance while becoming stock characters: cruel women.

When Paris again turns his attention to the relationship of Leir and Cordeilla, he retains the key details of Geoffrey's account, including Cordeilla's reign. First, he offers a compressed version of Leir's speech bemoaning his error in dismissing Cordeilla, the old king's journey to France, and the daughter's tearful response to the news of her father's having only one knight in his service (*CM* 1:32). Next, Paris closely follows Geoffrey's account of how Cordeilla restores her father's dignity by returning him to his proper appearance and station—with a full retinue—before she and her husband publicly commit to returning Leir to the British throne (*CM* 1:32). Although the redactor then changes the plot slightly by having both Cordeilla and Aganippus (instead of Aganippus alone) send messengers to gather troops, the plot sequence in which Leir takes his daughter to Britain, defeats his enemies in order to regain the throne, restores his people to their rightful social positions, and then dies three years later remains the same (*HRB* 31.250–55; *CM* 1:32). Like Geoffrey, Paris states that Cordeilla “regni gubernacula adepta [inherited the government of the kingdom]” following the death of her husband and explains that she rules “pacifice [peacefully]” for five years, until her nephews rebel because they object to having a female king (*HRB* 31.255–56; *CM* 1:32–33).¹³ Paris even retains Geoffrey's strong word *saevitiae* ‘savagery’ to describe the nephews' belligerence as

well as the detail that Cordeilla commits suicide in response to her loss of power (*HRB* 32.260–70; *CM* 1:33).

What changes the meaning of Cordeilla's reign within *The Major History*, however, is the way in which Paris translates (in the sense of relocates) it. Because *The Major History* excises the reigns of other female kings, Cordeilla's reign becomes the lone exception to the rule of male kingship. Consequently, the rebellion of her nephews—though brutal—reestablishes the political norm, and readers are likely to conclude that female rule is impracticable. By carefully preserving the Galfridian details that Cordeilla gains the throne after her father has regained the British throne through success on the battlefield and her husband has died, Paris makes it probable that his readers will assume that no woman can retain power for long without either a father's or a husband's aid.

Although Paris borrows Queen Ganhumara from the Arthurian section of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, his presentation of Arturus's queen provides a key example of how he erases any trace of political power that a Galfridian female—whether legendary or historical—might possess. Unlike Geoffrey who makes Ganhumara co-regent with Modredus, Paris transforms co-regency into temporary rule by Modredus alone (*HRB* 164.13–16). The Galfridian account uses the dative case to describe the transfer of political power from Arturus to both his nephew and his queen: the king is “Modredo nepoti suo atque Ganhumaræ reginæ Britanniam ad conseruandum permittens [entrusting Britain to his nephew Modredus and to Queen Ganhumara to take care of]” (*HRB* 164.14–15). *The Major History*, in contrast, alters the grammar of the sentence so that Modredus controls both all of Britain and the queen: “Rex Arthurus, partes Gallicanas suae ditioni subdere cupiens, parato navigio, Modredo nepoti suo custodiam totius Britanniae cum uxore sua commisit [King Arturus, desiring to put Gallic territories under his rule, departed by ship having given the guardianship of all of Britain, along with his wife, to his nephew Modredus for protection]” (*CM* 1:239). By replacing the dative form *Ganhumaræ reginæ* with an ablative form that strips Queen Ganhumara of both her name and royal title, *uxore sua*, Paris places Ganhumara under the control of Arturus's nephew and in so doing erases any trace of the power she exercises in *The History of the Kings of Britain*.

Paris's depictions of post-Conquest queens—including Empress Matilda—follow the pattern established by his redaction of both the reigns of Geoffrey's female kings and the coregency of Ganhumara, thus confirming that he systematically dismisses women as political actors. For example, when Paris interpolates Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* into his *Major History*, he not only interprets particular prophecies

as referring to William the Conqueror, Henry I, and Empress Matilda but also adds an odd dimension to these prophecies by reducing Empress Matilda to a distraught mother and lover (*CM* 1:198–215). He reports, as part of his account of the civil war initiated by King Henry I's death, that a weeping Matilda ran to King Stephen, declared Henry II to be her son by Stephen, and then reconciled the two men by baring her breasts and begging for peace (*CM* 1:204–6). This revision of Norman history on Paris's part was probably inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth's character Tonwenna, who sobs and bares her breasts as she convinces her sons Belinus and Brennius to end their civil war (*HRB* 41.126–52). The fact that Matthew Paris's Matilda not only weeps but also uses this dramatic gesture in order to prevent a parricide or filicide—reminding her son Henry of how she gave birth to and nursed him—suggests that the redactor intentionally creates this parallel with Geoffrey's history (*CM* 1:204–5). Although the format of the prophecies prevents Paris from condemning the empress for sexual wrongdoing, his addition to *The Prophecies of Merlin* both demotes Matilda from ruler to maternal peaceweaver and besmirches her honor by making her guilty of incest with her cousin.

Other details position Stephen, not Matilda, as a political actor. For example, Paris states that Matilda's expulsion from London happens “mox sive subdolorum instinctu, sive Dei nutu [immediately, whether because of the instigation of the deceitful or because of the will of God],” a description that raises the possibility that God caused Matilda to suffer this humiliating rejection (*CM* 2:173). Given the way in which Paris refers to the faction leaders, readers are likely to view God as favoring Stephen rather than Matilda: the title “regem Stephanum [King Stephen]” has much greater authority than that of “Matildis filia regis Henrici, quae fuerat imperatrix [Matilda, daughter of King Henry, who had been empress]” (*CM* 2:173, 170). When Paris records her death, he assigns to Matilda—whom he labels (perhaps condescendingly) as the “maxima mulierum [greatest of women]”—a minor role in history and presents her as a model of womanhood rather than as an individuated historical figure in her own right: he defines her as the daughter, wife, and mother of a monarch named Henry (*CM* 2:324).¹⁴ This phrasing keeps both the empress and other female figures safely in the margins of history, for even the “greatest of women” can achieve nothing more significant than marrying one monarch and giving birth to another.

Paris's tendency to schematize his female figures by depicting them as models of virtue and vice, rather than as individuated historical actors, is evident throughout *The Major History*. This tendency—one which makes his approach to historiography differ fundamentally from Geoffrey of

Monmouth's—causes the redactor's indiscriminate lumping together of historical and biblical women, and of historical and miraculous events. For example, Paris praises Queen Matilda (wife of King Henry I) for washing the feet of lepers during her lifetime as well as for her sanctity, which he asserts based on evidence that miracles occurred after her soul ascended to heaven (*CM* 2:130, 2:144). Queen Matilda thus becomes schematized into sacred history, for this historian likens her to the holy women of the Bible he has already discussed. For Paris, both Mary Magdalene and Martha are noteworthy primarily because of the miracles associated with them rather than because of their deeds while Christ was alive (*CM* 1:105).

When presenting female figures as negative exempla, this redactor links figures from sacred history, legend, and secular history in a similar manner—utilizing all of them as models of vice whose activities serve to harm or destroy the males whose lives have much greater significance within his narrative. Eve's significance for Paris lies in her creation from Adam's side and bodily union with Adam, a union which results not only in the first parents' shame but also in their expulsion (along with all their progeny) from Paradise (*CM* 1:2–3). Eve's role in *The Major History* is almost entirely negative, for there is no mention of her connection with the Virgin Mary. When Paris interpolates Geoffrey of Monmouth's figure Iudon (although without naming her) into his narrative, he presents her as an exemplum of treachery and cruelty. His version of this murderous mother's story focuses not on her emotional state and motivation to avenge the death of Ferreux but instead on how “nacta ergo tempus quo Porrex sopitus fuerat, cum ancillis suis in multis eum frustis crudeliter laniando mactavit [then, at nighttime, when Porrex was asleep, with her maidservants she slaughtered him into many pieces—cruelly with butchery]” (*CM* 1:55). She literally destroys her son.

Paris's schematizing becomes absolute, however, when he depicts Eleanor of Aquitaine as the embodiment of and ultimate incitement to illicit desire. Ignoring her historical roles as duchess and queen, Paris depicts Eleanor as a destroyer of male virtue by suggesting that she was the main reason for the disastrous results of the Second Crusade. Paris claims not only that King Louis VII was in her sexual thrall and therefore insisted that she accompany him but also that Eleanor's notorious adulterous liaisons—even with Saracens—while on Crusade, in addition to her other crimes, led to her divorce from the king of France.¹⁵ Among these crimes is that of consanguinity for which she, rather than her husband, receives the blame. When Paris uses the image of the eagle, one that Geoffrey of Monmouth uses with possible reference to the power of Empress Matilda, he does so to defame Eleanor: she is “aquila

quia rapax et regalis [just like the eagle, insatiable and regal]" (*HRB* 113.85–86; *CM* 1:206). Finally, Paris brands Eleanor as the instigator of the rebellion of Henry the Young King and his brothers Richard and Geoffrey against their father (and Eleanor's second husband) King Henry II, for it is the "consilio matris suae [the advice/suggestion of their mother]" that causes these young noblemen to betray their king (*CM* 2:285–86).

For Matthew Paris, female figures from sacred history, legend, and secular history serve merely as didactic exempla that can teach women how to behave properly and show men what kinds of women to avoid. In addition, because he, "like most of his contemporaries, defined history as the deeds of great men," these female figures are mere footnotes to his historiographical endeavor.¹⁶ Geoffrey's presentation of female figures, in contrast, gives his *History of the Kings of Britain* a dimension that the history of this monk-cleric does not provide. Although Antonia Gransden praises Matthew Paris as "a great English historian" and dismisses Geoffrey of Monmouth for "masquerading as a historian," she ignores two facts that refute her conclusion.¹⁷ The first is that Paris, like most medieval historians, accepts Geoffrey's history as a legitimate source and integrates many of its figures—including several female ones—into his account. The second is that Paris fails to individuate even historical women, for their role in his version of the past is to act as reflections of or (as is more common) contrasts to his male figures. Because he reduces female figures to models of Christian virtue and vice that lack independent political agency, Matthew Paris is, in one sense, less of a historian than Geoffrey of Monmouth. Nevertheless, Laȝamon dismantles Galfridian historiography just as thoroughly as Matthew Paris—despite the fact that his translation expands rather than condenses the account of the early British past that he derived from both *The History of the Kings of Britain* and Wace's *roman de Brut*.

Assessing Laȝamon's Treatment of Female Figures

Ascertaining the *Brut*'s position within the tradition of English poetry is difficult because the uncertainty of its composition date precludes making definitive statements regarding its patrons, cultural context, or intended audience.¹⁸ Scholars can, however, assert both that this translation of the *roman de Brut* reflects Laȝamon's access to Geoffrey's history, among other sources, and that the *Brut* survives in two significantly different thirteenth-century redactions; as a result, *Brut* scholarship often concerns either sources or the discrepancies between the Caligula and Otho redactions of the poem.¹⁹ In addition, the English poem's archaized

verse form encourages *Brut* specialists to consider how 'Anglo-Saxon' the poem is, in both its form and content.²⁰ Scholarly focus on paleography and prosody has tended to keep the *Brut*'s female figures in the background of Laȝamon studies, for male figures dominate in both the Old English poetic tradition and literary criticism about it.

Nevertheless, the scholars who have considered Laȝamon's treatment of female figures (characters deriving from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* but already translated by Wace into Anglo-Norman French) evaluate it in radically different ways. Occupying the negative end of the spectrum of opinion is Maureen Fries. She labels the poet's treatment of female figures as indicative of "fever-pitch" misogyny, citing both the mutilation of a number of females in the *Brut*—the chopping off of their noses or breasts—and King Arður's "dream-dismemberment" of his disloyal wife: he chops Wenhauer into pieces in a prophetic dream about his downfall.²¹ Offering less severe but still negative assessments of the poet's treatment of female figures are Françoise H. M. Le Saux and fellow French literature specialist E. M. O'Sharkey. Le Saux highlights both Laȝamon's moralizing narrative stance, a stance that produces a sharp contrast between the virtuous Tonuenne and the treacherous Rouwenne, and the potentially incestuous aspects of the familial relationships the poem depicts.²² O'Sharkey concludes that the *Brut*'s presentation of Wenhauer's fate causes the queen to "fail to arouse the reader's sympathy," for she enters a convent out of fear rather than sincere regret at her misconduct.²³ Offering a cautiously positive assessment is Rosamund Allen, who acknowledges the disempowered status of Laȝamon's female figures but credits the poet with presenting female suffering compassionately as well as with offering "a compelling account of the female perspective" on events.²⁴ At the positive end of the critical spectrum is Anglo-Saxon literature specialist Marie-Françoise Alamichel. She praises Laȝamon for having "attached more importance to women and to love than his two predecessors" Geoffrey and Wace.²⁵ Although Alamichel's assessment of Laȝamon's treatment of female figures in the *Brut* appeals to readers' desire to construe the English poet positively, both the brutally masculinist world of the poem and the harshly judgmental narrative voice through which the poet presents this world make the argument that Laȝamon is a friend to women impossible to sustain. In keeping with most studies of the *Brut*, my analysis will cite evidence drawn from the Caligula redaction because it preserves the most complete version of the poem now extant.²⁶

In a few cases, Laȝamon emulates Wace in making female figures more prominent than in the work he translates. For example, where

Wace says that Corineüs's wrestling match was "volentiers l'unt tuit esguardée [willingly watched by everyone]" (*RB* 1110), Laʒamon transforms a genderless 'everyone' into both male and female group members: "ƿer wes moni wepmon, ƿer wes moni wifmon, / ƿer wes muchel folc at ƿere wrastlinge [There was many a man, there was many a woman, there was a great multitude at the wrestling]" (*LB* 936–37). Laʒamon also makes the sister of King Penda of Mercia, who becomes King Chadwalein's wife and whom Wace mentions in passing as "mult bele, / Gente e curteise damisele [a most beautiful, noble and courteous girl]," more prominent by assigning to her both a name (Helene) and political significance (*RB* 14389–90). According to the *Brut*, Helene is "hende," an adjective denoting both beauty and virtue, and a woman for whom King Leouwis of France "ʒirneð . . . fuliwis [yearns . . . greatly]" (*LB* 15516–18). She also inspires the love of her husband (whom Laʒamon identifies as King Cadwalan of southern England) as well as wins for him not only "lufe of hire cunnen [the friendship of her race]" but also control over an entire kingdom (*LB* 15523–30). As *Brut* specialist Elizabeth J. Bryan explains, this Helen combines the foreignness of Helen of Troy with the peaceweaving of Helen the mother of Constantine, thereby becoming a sign of both a strong, victorious and a weak, defeated British nation.²⁷

Eliminating a source of confusion present in both Geoffrey's and Wace's narratives of the British past, namely that a female figure named Galaes appears in the list of King Ebrauc's children while a second figure of the same name appears elsewhere, the English poet presents one female figure and grants historical significance to her: his Galoes becomes the origin of the name 'Wales.' Laʒamon does more, however, than merely clarify that the queen mentioned at the end of Geoffrey's and Wace's narratives and the woman listed among the daughters of King Ebrauc are the same person.²⁸ He augments Wace's description of her as the fairest of the king's daughters so that she becomes "leouest ƿone kinge of ƿan sustren and of ƿon breoðeren [most beloved to the king of all the sisters and the brothers]," thereby causing her value to her father to exceed that of both her male and female siblings (*LB* 1359). Laʒamon even adds the detail that Galoes, like her two sisters who receive his praise, has been raised well (*LB* 1362). By both describing Galoes as an individual and inserting into the list of Ebrauc's daughters the statement that Wales was named after this woman, Laʒamon grants to her the status of a founder of Wales (*LB* 1357). More importantly, whereas Wace says that Wales might derive its name either from Queen Galaes or from Duke Guales but favors the male-derived etymology (*RB* 1276–80), Laʒamon reestablishes a Galfridian balance between the male- and female-derived

etymologies by omitting Wace's statement that "Guales fud bien de grant puissance / Si fud de lui grant reparlance [Guales was very powerful and there was great talk of him]" (RB 1281–82). Finally, by twice noting the origin of the name 'Wales' so early in his account of the British past, Laʒamon underscores this female figure's historical significance (LB 1061, 1357).

Nevertheless, whereas Geoffrey offers three possible origins for the term 'the Welsh' (HRB 207.592–94) and Wace offers two possible origins for the term 'Wales' (RB 14855–58), the English poet blends his sources: "Seððen hit is icleped Wales for þere quen Galoes; / and for þan duke Gualun Wælsce men me heom hateð [Since then it has been called Wales because of Queen Galoes, and the people are known as the Welsh because of Duke Gualun]" (LB 1061–62). This statement enables Laʒamon to present the land of Wales (one occupied by the defeated Britons) as feminine but the identity of the Welsh people as male-derived, a distinction consistent with the poem's emphasis on the patriline. Although the examples of Galoes and the female figures discussed above are striking, they are exceptions to the misogynist rule in the *Brut*. Both Laʒamon's invocation of Duke Gualun and his decision to omit details regarding four of King Ebrauc's daughters that Wace includes remind readers that Laʒamon's translation typically decreases, rather than increases, the prominence of female figures (RB 1563–66; LB 1351–62).

Although Allen is right to caution readers against dismissing the fictional world Laʒamon creates as merely "savage" and "bloodthirsty," readers of Laʒamon's *Brut* familiar with Geoffrey's history and Wace's translation of it will be struck by the violence of a fictional world in which military action dominates and females characters are often victims of the violent acts that males commit.²⁹ *Brut* specialist Kenneth J. Tiller not only acknowledges the violent nature of the world Laʒamon's characters inhabit but also identifies its likely cause: the Anglo-Normans' view of the supposedly primitive monolingual Anglo-Saxons as 'barbarians,' and of the English language as "a symbol of the 'barbaric', even of the 'strange' or 'other.'"³⁰ The poem's violent aesthetic is palpable both when it lingers over the gory deaths of individual warriors or kings, and when it elaborates upon the slaughter of huge numbers of warriors—slaughter that leaves battlefields littered with broken bodies.³¹ Arður's reign provides a vivid illustration of how the poem aestheticizes violence: Arður's victory over the Romans produces 50,000 Roman corpses while his victory over Modred produces 200,000 bodies "tohauwen [cut to pieces]" (LB 13966–68, 14263–65). That Arður ends his military career surrounded by a staggering number of dismembered

corpses is emblematic of Laȝamon's masculinist sensibilities that push female figures to the margins of a narrative centered on brutal military encounters.

The most powerful indicator of the *Brut's* violent aesthetic, however, is the extreme brutality of its kings of Britain in comparison to their Wacean and Galfridian counterparts. In this hypermasculine translation of a narrative of the past that originally had feminist sympathies, acts and threats of violence—along with insensitivity to the needs of the people—become normative and praiseworthy means of maintaining power. Brutus (Britain's first king), whom Geoffrey of Monmouth presents as both noble and sensitive to his wife's emotional needs and Wace presents as cruel to his enemies but brave and of noble birth, becomes Laȝamon's means of establishing a precedent for the often brutal and sometimes cruel behavior of the rulers who will follow him (*HRB* 15.251–53, 15.270–75; *RB* 576–82). Laȝamon's Brutus has no interaction with his wife beyond acquiring her from her father, and he keeps both his future father-in-law King Pandrasus and the king's brother “mid ærmliche witen [in dreadful torment]” before demanding a huge amount of property in exchange for the king's life (*LB* 525–48). According to Wace, Britain's first king is a lawgiver who brings peace and harmony (*RB* 1251–56), but according to Laȝamon, peace results from the brutal enforcement of the law: Brutus ensures that anyone who “swa vfele . . . mihte don [might behave . . . so wickedly]” gets “ihon [hanged to death],” causing his people to hold him in “mucheledrede,” a phrase that can be translated as either ‘great fear’ or ‘great reverence’ (*LB* 1044–45). King Ruhhudibras continues Brutus's tradition of leadership, requiring peace and harmony “vppe leome and vppe lif [under penalty of limb and life]” (*LB* 1407).

Laȝamon's tendency to accept and praise behavior that his predecessors would call tyrannous results in his presenting Brennes as an effective and honorable ruler (*LB* 2982–86), a king whom Geoffrey of Monmouth characterizes as savagely oppressive and Wace accuses of “mainte cruelté [many cruelties]” (*HRB* 44.212–16; *RB* 3157). That the English poet chooses to present violent oppression as effective leadership becomes even more evident when he inserts into Wace's account of how King Gurguint brings peace to Britain a speech, one in which the king urges arson and slaughter as means of maintaining his sovereignty. In this speech, Gurguint exhorts his men to burn the Danes' houses as well as to kill not only the Danish men who have rebelled against him but also the rebels' wives and children (*RB* 3241–67; *LB* 3058–66). Even King Luces, whose conversion makes Britain a Christian land, uses violence to achieve his ends. Contradicting Wace who says that the Britons

convert in order to follow their king's good example, Laȝamon reports, "Ða fulluht nuldren vnderfon þe king heom letten fordon [The king had all those who would not accept the sacrament of baptism put to death]" (LB 5073). This detail likens Luces to a Crusader who compels 'barbarians' to convert, only in this case the 'barbarians' are his own people.

The kings of the *Brut* also lack Galfridian consideration for their people. For example, King Lud remains the builder of the city of London that he is in both Geoffrey's and Wace's accounts. However, in the *Brut*, he cares about his own aggrandizement rather than the well-being of his people. Lud takes half the possessions of all the wealthy men in the kingdom so that he can build himself a splendid home, and he ensures that the city is "swiðe hende [very noble]" by expelling from it "alle þe vnstronge men [all the enfeebled people]" (LB 3537–38). As the ultimate embodiment of kingship in the poem, Arður proves to be unrelentingly harsh to his people: he avenges himself on the city of Winchester for supporting Modred through what Tiller calls the "brutal massacre of [its] citizens."³² This model of kingship is entirely consistent with the way in which the poem aestheticizes violence as Laȝamon translates what was originally a Galfridian narrative.

Laȝamon's narrative voice is the other major factor that makes the *Brut*'s version of early British history inherently hostile to female figures because, through it, he harshly condemns all behavior that does not conform to his aggressively Christian and socially conservative values. His self-description as a priest living at Areley is consistent with what readers of the poem familiar with Geoffrey's history will notice: that this voice is more moralizing and judgmental than Geoffrey's (LB 1–5). In keeping with his view of the Britons as "ancient and loyal Christians right from the first" and his decision to shift the narrative focus of his French source by expanding the portion of the narrative that takes place during the Christian era, the English poet harshly condemns any character whose behavior is either non-Christian or unchristian.³³ Throughout the *Brut*, Laȝamon as narrator rejects non-Christians: he labels the pagan Romans who challenge Arður's supremacy as "hæðene leode —Godd heo seondeð laðe! [a heathen people—they are offensive to God!]" and the Saxons as "hæðene hundes [heathen dogs]" (LB 13635, 10929). Even the unnamed man who plans the burning of Cirencester likewise receives the narrator's harsh condemnation because he is "an hæðene mon [a heathen man]": Laȝamon declares, "awaried wuðren he forþan! [may he be damned for this!]" (LB 14586).

Kings who display unchristian behavior, whether by practicing pagan rituals or by committing political betrayal, receive a similarly

harsh response. The pagan divination method that reveals how Brutus can provide a home for his people, a method which Geoffrey presents positively but Wace labels as the Devil's deception, draws Laȝamon's absolute condemnation (*HRB* 16.278–90; *RB* 635–40). According to the English poet, the goddess Diana receives the Devil's love and performs magic with his aid, her temple is a space over which the Devil rules, and worship of her is an offering that the Devil receives (*LB* 571–83).³⁴ When Laȝamon re-presents King Bladud, whom Geoffrey of Monmouth presents matter-of-factly as an intelligent man and teacher of magic who dies while using wings of his own making (*HRB* 30.130–33) and Wace faults merely for the “folement [rashness]” that causes his death (*RB* 1654), the king becomes a servant of the Devil and an example of pagan arrogance. Because Bladud practices magic, the *Brut*'s narration condemns him for acquiring information through conversing with the Devil (*LB* 1419–20), and because the king builds a temple to the goddess Minerva and boasts that he will use artificial wings to fly like a bird, he is “feie [fated to die]” and falls “on þene rof þat he al todraf [onto the roof so that he (is) entirely smashed into pieces]” (*LB* 1425–35, 1443–46). King Peredur, whose Galfridian counterpart dies suddenly despite ruling extremely well and whose Wacean one dies because he has colluded with his brother Jugenes to usurp the British throne, receives the worst possible punishment in the *Brut*: “swa vuele he luuede his lif þat þe Scucke hine ifenge! [so evilly had he lived his life that the Devil snatched him!]” (*HRB* 51.339–42; *RB* 3587–98; *LB* 3408). These examples reveal Laȝamon's lack of tolerance for non-Christian or unchristian behavior.

However, the poet reserves his harshest words for kings whose sins violate the norms of traditional masculinity, as the stories of two lecherous kings demonstrate. In contrast to Wace who condemns King Menbriz's rejection of his wife and choice of sodomy indirectly, by associating his death with the destruction of Sodom (*RB* 1477–81), the English poet adds details that underscore how Menbriz's sexual sin not only violates the norms of traditional masculinity but also undermines the social system in which the *Brut*'s warrior-kings function. First Laȝamon makes more explicit the king's choice to commit sinful acts. He identifies Menbriz's male partners and asserts that the king has rejected all female company: “He forheowede al his quene, / his hired-men he nom to bedde, and wifmen he al bilafde [He completely rejected his queen, he took his male servants to bed, and he completely forsook women]” (*LB* 1289–90). This description suggests that the king's lifestyle disrupts the functioning of the royal household, preventing him from fulfilling his procreative role as a warrior-king. Then the English poet encourages

readers to scorn Menbriz by inserting the information that the king hates everyone, hatred that results in his killing the nobles and earning the hatred of the poor (*LB* 1282–83). Having made Menbriz's behavior more repulsive to readers than it is in the *roman de Brut*, Laʒamon makes his death more vivid for them. Wolves “him to lupen on alchere halue / and toluken þene king and his leomen todrowen, / and his hors alswa, þat deade he weoren bo twa [leapt upon him from every side, and ripped the king into pieces and pulled his limbs apart—and his horse also—until both were dead]” (*LB* 1301–3). By asserting that this fate is a direct consequence of the king's rejection of heterosexual intercourse, Laʒamon presents heterosexuality as an essential element of kingly identity (*LB* 1288). Furthermore, violations of heteronormativity are more important to this poet than other sins, for he reports that Menbriz's acts of sodomy—not his many acts of murder—receive God's punishment.

In the more complex case of Wace's King Malgo (Malgus in the *Brut*) who is a handsome man, a successful conqueror, and a generous king but commits sodomy, Laʒamon again makes the sin of sodomy seem more heinous than Wace does (*RB* 13356–74). He does so by creating a sharp contrast between the positive outcomes of Malgus's reign and the terrible results of his sin. First Laʒamon emphasizes Malgus's good looks and describes the high standard that all the king's warriors and guests meet, as well as the contentment of the Britons under his rule (*LB* 14379–89). Then the poet denounces the king, asserting that both the Lord and the women of Britain reject Malgus because of the sodomitic culture he fosters: “He luuede þane sunne þe lað is ure Drihtene— / þa wifmen heo forsoken, to mare sunne heo token, / wapmon luuede wapmon; wifmen heom laðe weoren / swa þat monie þusende wendden of bissen lond, / wifmen swiðe feire, ferden to oðere þeoden, / for muchel scome heom þuhte þat wepmen heom ne rohte [He loved that sin that is hateful to our Lord: he forsook women to commit a greater sin, the male loved the male. Women were hateful to them so that many thousands of very beautiful women departed for other countries, for they considered it a major disgrace that the males paid no attention to them]” (*LB* 14392–97). This translation not only emphasizes how far below the standard of traditional masculine behavior King Malgus falls but also, through a mass exodus of women who find sodomy repulsive, transforms the king's sin into a moral contagion that infects other men and triggers a political crisis for all of Britain. Laʒamon's criticism of sexual activity that undermines traditional masculinity could not be stronger.

Another story reveals how the *Brut*'s staunch defense of traditional masculinity creates an ethos in which manliness is equated with goodness.

King Cherin commits the sin of gluttony, but whereas Wace presents him as a drunkard lucky enough never to experience war despite his failure to perform a single brave action (*RB* 3652–58), Laʒamon censures and dismisses him. In the *Brut*, King Cherin becomes unmanly, lacking in honor, and useless as a leader: “Weoren al his duʒeðen bilefed oppe drenche, / and al he leas his wurðscipe for þon win-scenche; / ne dude nauer oðer god ne greiðe on his þeode [All his powers of manhood were abandoned to drink, and he lost all his worthiness because of wine-drinking. He never did others any good, nor provided for his people]” (*LB* 3453–56). For Laʒamon, the loss of manliness is the worst possible fate for a king because, without it, he can neither bring honor to himself nor lead his people.

However, the story of the character that Geoffrey names Eldol when mentioning him in a king-list best demonstrates how the English poet’s masculinist focus creates an environment inherently hostile to female figures (*HRB* 52.363). Whereas Wace criticizes this king for earning his people’s hatred through his foolish desire to ravish every wife and virgin, regardless of how high her social rank might be (*RB* 3713–22), Laʒamon presents him as a serial rapist. The crimes of Laʒamon’s Ældolf destroy not only his own reputation but also the reputations of his female victims. He is an evil corrupter of women who “vniseliche luuede [lived vilely]” and whose “deden weoren forcuðe [deeds were infamous]”: “Nes nan swa god wif i þon londe þe he walde / ʒif heo wes a wiht hende þat he ne makede hore; / þæh hit weoren an eorles wif he binom hire al hire æðelen; / þe ʒunge wifmen and þe ælde he makeden to sconde [There was no woman in the land so pious that he did not desire her and, if she was a beautiful woman, make a whore of. Even if she were a nobleman’s wife, he completely despoiled her of her honor; he disgraced all women, the young and the old]” (*LB* 3500–5). Although Laʒamon derives this story from the *roman de Brut*, the attitude he expresses through it—that women who have been sexually assaulted are whores—is his own.

As the cases of Kings Menbriz, Malgus, Cherin, and Ældolf demonstrate, the social order within which the *Brut*’s characters function depends on strict adherence to traditional gender roles. Consequently, the *Brut*’s female figures lack the access to heroic action and political power that they have in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history. Laʒamon’s aestheticization of physical violence and narration of events in an aggressively judgmental voice help to account for his poem’s failure to replicate two key aspects of Galfridian historiography: attributing mostly positive traits to female figures, and presenting the exercise of power by females as both possible and of benefit to early British society.

Laʒamon's tendency to judge his characters more harshly than either Geoffrey or Wace stems from a traditional, misogynist stance regarding gender roles that the English poet expresses in the *Brut*: that womanish behavior in men is shameful, but manly behavior in women is noble. In a passage Laʒamon adds to Wace's account of King Vortiger's reign, the citizens criticize the king for weeping in response to his brother's death: "Nert þu na wimman swa sære to wepen [You are no woman to weep so loudly]" (LB 6804). Conversely, when the pagans Wanis and Melga threaten to overrun the Britons by means of their alliance, some British women who function like warriors receive Laʒamon's apparent approval. His narration presents with satisfaction the fact that these women do not merely pray that their enemies' souls will suffer in the afterlife; they initiate enemy suffering by tearing Melga's companions to pieces: "Þus þa Bruttisce quenen moni þusend aqualden [And so the British women slayed many thousands]" (LB 6420–26). This moment of female action, however, is the exception: female passivity and victimization are the rule in the *Brut*. Laʒamon's translation of his French source dwells on—and encourages his readers to enjoy the drama of—acts of violence committed against female characters, purifies the few truly good females he includes, demonizes and condemns the evil female figures he borrows from the *roman de Brut*, and denies to queen consorts and female kings the power they possess in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. As a result, Geoffrey's feminist version of the early British past receives complete dismantling in the *Brut* as Laʒamon's process of translation causes female figures to suffer marginalization, disempowerment, and demonization.

Aestheticizing Sexual Violence and the Undermining of Female Heroism

In keeping with the aestheticization of acts of violence against male bodies in Laʒamon's *Brut*, acts of violence committed against female bodies become more conspicuous than they are in Wace's poem; consequently, the suffering of female characters becomes a potential source of titillation for Laʒamon's readers. That he is willing to use the suffering of female figures to provide such titillation is evident in the English poet's elaboration upon the *roman de Brut*'s account of the Scots' surrender to King Artur. In the *Brut*, the actions of the Scottish women remain what they were in Wace's poem: they beg Arður for mercy and make the argument that, as fellow Christians, the Scots deserve mercy from the king. Nevertheless, Laʒamon makes these female figures truly pathetic victims of male violence. Whereas Wace describes the Scottish women as having

torn clothes, bare feet and heads, and scratched faces, Laȝamon transforms them into the most pitiable of creatures (*RB* 9470–72). They approach the king in near-nakedness and wound themselves in his presence: the women “curuen heore lockes and þer niðer læiden / to þas kinges foten biforen al his duȝeðen; / nailes to heore nebbe þat æfter hit bledde; / neh þan alle clæne nakede heo weoren [tore their locks and there dropped them at the king’s feet, in front of all his troops. They took fingernails to their faces so that afterwards they bled. Nearly all of them were completely naked]” (*LB* 10916–19). Because these women are so destitute that they are nearly naked and so hysterical with grief that they tear at their own bodies, their story of mistreatment at the hands of both the Saxons and the Britons gains emotional impact. They are widows who have suffered hunger as well as many “hærmen [harms]” and “wan-siðen [woeful-fortunes],” including having to witness murders that the Britons committed using water as well as the usual weapons (*LB* 10925–26). These women are also, however, potential objects of fascination for both the witnesses to their approach within the poem and the readers of the poem, not only because their bodies are damaged due to self-inflicted wounds but also because their lack of clothing is the final, climactic element in their description.

The poet’s aestheticization of violence, particularly that committed against female bodies, is just as evident in other revisions. When reworking the plot sequence in the *roman de Brut* in which the Saxon leader Cheldric attacks the Britons after Artur has allowed him to return home, Laȝamon expands Wace’s description of the mass slaughter of men, especially “vilains [peasants],” and of the suffering of women (*RB* 9243). Women become noteworthy victims of the Saxons because “alle þa gode wiues heo stikeden mid cnifes [they stabbed all the chaste wives to death with knives],” and “alle þa maidene heo mid morðe aqualden [they put all the young girls to death with violence]” (*LB* 10459–60). Laȝamon again adds female victims of violence to his narrative when revising Wace’s account of the pagan King Gurmund’s attack on the Britons, during which both female and male religious are beaten, hunted, and murdered (*RB* 13480–81). In Laȝamon’s version of events, the already brutal situation in his French source becomes more so when the general statement that “Femmes hunir [Women (were) dishonoured]” (*RB* 13484) receives harsher and more specific wording: “Þa riche wif...his hired-men makien to horen [His retainers made whores...of high-ranking women]” (*LB* 14538). Significantly, even when Wace’s description already includes explicit references to violence against women, Laȝamon inserts more of them. Wace’s commentary, that “Femmes hunir, humes percier, / Enfanȝ en berȝ esbüeler [Women

(were) dishonoured, men impaled, children disembowelled in their cradles]" while churchmen fled, fearing for their lives, becomes two separate and more explicit descriptions (*RB* 13484–85, 13494–500). In the first, monks are "forpinede [cruelly tortured]," priests and clerics slaughtered, noblewomen raped, all children "seoðe [boiled to death]," and all warriors immediately hanged (*LB* 14537–42). In the second, Gurmund causes women to suffer horrible disfigurement along with the men, but the women's wounds are both more severe and sexual in nature than the men's: "Of cnihten he carf þe lippes, of madenen þa tittes, / preostes he blende [He chopped off the lips of warriors, the nipples of young women; he blinded priests]" (*LB* 14652–53). Although Laʒamon stirs his readers' sympathies with images of female suffering, he simultaneously invites them to dwell on the naked, sexualized, and mutilated bodies of female victims of male violence.

The case of Vrsele and her fellow brides-to-be provides a vivid and extended example of how the *Brut* dwells on and intensifies the female victimization already present in the *roman de Brut*; by doing so, the English poem obliterates even a trace of the heroic resistance that the Galfridian counterparts of these female figures demonstrate in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Whereas Wace focuses on the suffering of the virgins due to a terrible storm and their eventual enslavement or murder by the heathens (*RB* 6001–76), Laʒamon focuses on threats and acts of sexual violence against these young women in ways that increase the emotional impact of such acts. The English poet makes Vrsele's later violation all the more terrible by making her both more precious to her father and greater in reputation than her Wacean counterpart: Wace's "mult bele [very beautiful]" maiden becomes "ænne dohter swiðe deore [a single daughter very beloved]" who "hæfde al þat hære-word of þan maidenen of þis ærd [of all the young women of this land had the greatest reputation]" and "wes on sele [was blessed]" (*RB* 5999; *LB* 5945–47). In addition, despite the fact that the maidens do not protest being sent to Brittany to marry their countrymen, the *Brut* account includes an unnecessary threat of sexualized violence against them. Although the British women have hesitated to travel only because they lack assurance "þat heo scolden heore while wel biteon [that they would be spending their time well]" on worthy men (*LB* 5944), Vrsele's father Adionard tells Conan—the man he has chosen to become his son-in-law—exactly how he will brutalize these young women if they refuse to leave their homeland: "Þider heo scullen liðen ʒif heo wulleð libben, / oðer ich heom wullen alle fordon and bi þan titten anhon [They shall sail there if they wish to live, or else I will put them to death and hang them up by their breasts]" (*LB* 5954–55). This threat demonstrates the strength

of Adionard's determination to ensure that these marriages happen, but its gratuitousness becomes all the more evident when the young women respond to the call for volunteers for the population project not only with enthusiasm but also in greater numbers than Vrsele desires (*LB* 5960–64). As a result, readers are likely to conclude that the poet creates the image of dead women hung up by their breasts merely to titillate. Laȝamon then replicates both Wace's description of the terrible storm and his call for readers to pity the women who suffer because of it (*RB* 6041–64; *LB* 5973–85).

Nevertheless, Laȝamon's encouragement of readerly pity does not change the fact that he denies to these female figures even a moment to display heroism by redefining the circumstances under which Vrsele suffers sexual violation, and her companions suffer a variety of horrifying fates. In the Vulgate version of *The History of the Kings of Britain*, the maidens' refusal to consent to intercourse with pagan marauders results in immediate death for "maximam partem [the greatest portion]" of them, and, in the *roman de Brut*, "plusurs [many]" of the young women die for the same reason (*HRB* 88.394–95; *RB* 6082–86). Laȝamon's *Brut*, in contrast, fills the gap in the narrative concerning the fates of the young women not included in this group. It does so by subjecting Vrsele to terrible humiliation in addition to the loss of her virginity and depicting some of her companions as embodiments of stereotypically feminine weakness:

Melga nom Vrsele, þa scolden beon quene,
and scome hire bihedde and ladde heo to his bedde.
þa þe heðene mon hæfuede on hire his wille idon,
he ȝæf heo his hired-monnen sone to makien to heore.
And summe heo heom saldenn for seoluer and for gold,
and monie and vnifoȝe heo þer ofsloȝen;
and sumne heo heom drengte in þere sæ deope,
and sumne heo Godd wiðsoken and to haðenescipe token.
And þus heo weoren forradde mid reowðe þan mæste. (*LB* 6037–45)

[Melga grabbed Vrsele, who ought to have been queen, and, with disgracing her in mind, carried her to his bed. When the heathen man had performed his act of lust upon her, he then gave her to his retainers to have as their whore. And some they sold for silver and for gold, and many and countless others they killed there; and some drowned themselves deep in the sea, and some renounced God and accepted heathenism. And so they were destroyed with the greatest cruelty.]

In this plot sequence, Laȝamon completes the process of transforming Geoffrey of Monmouth's brave and principled virgins into powerless

victims and sinners, a process that the Variant-redactor began and Wace continued.

In the *Brut*, Vrsele becomes powerless to prevent the repeated sexual violation that robs her of the identity she retains in *The History of the Kings of Britain*: that of a martyr willing to die to protect the purity of both her people's bloodline and her own body. In addition, her companions are no longer innocent victims who, as in the *roman de Brut*, suffer either slavery or murder at the hands of "þe heðene [the heathen]" (LB 6039); instead, they commit sins. Some are guilty of the sin of despair—committing suicide out of an apparent desire to avoid a worse death—while others are guilty of idolatry, the worshiping of false gods. Those who are willing to abandon the Christian faith in order to save their lives become anti-martyrs whose destruction is spiritual rather than physical. In Laȝamon's version of this episode, men commit violent acts that put their female victims under terrible pressure to compromise their principles, but the women become exemplars of all the physical and spiritual weakness of which male ecclesiastics so often accused women during the Middle Ages. As a result, no trace of the heroism through which Geoffrey gave these female figures dignity remains in the *Brut's* retelling of their story.

Another example of Laȝamon's tendency to transform female heroes into pathetic victims of sexual violence is Brien's sister, called Galarne in the *Brut*. Shortly before she appears in Laȝamon's poem, he degrades stereotypically feminine behavior—thus encouraging his readers to expect females to be passive and weak. He adds to the dialogue between Galarne's brother Brien and King Chadwalein the king's expression of disgust at his male companion's weeping: "Ðu ært ihalden kene gume; hauest þu nu quene þeouwes inume? [You are considered to be a bold warrior; have you now adopted the deportment of a woman?]" (LB 15113). Having provided a misogynistic prologue to his version of the story of Brien's sister, the English poet adds a backstory to it that first defines her as a rape victim and a heroine in need of a rescuer, and then denies her a single rescue attempt. According to this backstory, Galarne is "Briennes suster hende, ueirest wifmonne"—a phrase that either objectifies her by twice noting her beauty ("Brien's beautiful sister, fairest of women") or asserts both her virtue and beauty ("Brien's virtuous sister, fairest of women")—whom King Edwine has "mid strenðe . . . nom [seized . . . by force]" (LB 15210–13). After her kidnapping, the narration focuses on her loss of virginity, for "to bure me ladde, to þas kinges bedde [she was taken/dragged to a bedroom, to the king's bed]" (LB 15215). Wace's ambiguity about the situation becomes Laȝamon's assertion that Galarne suffers sexual violation. Then, although the English

poet adds the detail that “þe wifmon a wes þes ilke kinges iua [the woman was ever this same king’s enemy]” (*LB* 15217), he gives this female figure no opportunity to avenge herself on the man who has kidnapped and raped her. Her only gain is that she becomes marginally more impressive than her Wacean counterpart, for she demonstrates that she has recognized her brother: she puts a gold ring into her brother’s hand, pretending that the ring is a gift for the beggar her brother impersonates (*LB* 15376–79). Nevertheless, in a story that focuses on Galarne’s victimization and her brother’s careful preparation for his mission as an assassin, this one moment of flair does not give her the heroic dimension that her Galfridian counterpart possesses.

The expanded description of Brien’s actions, the presentation of Galarne as powerless, and her disappearance from the story all prevent Galarne from rising to the level of female hero in the *Brut*. Comparison of Wace’s and Laʒamon’s versions of this plot sequence reveals that the English poet offers a greatly expanded account of Brien’s preparations for the murder of the magician at King Edwine’s court that, although it does not change the plot structure, makes Brien a much more prominent character than his sister (*RB* 14252–72; *LB* 15307–55). In contrast, his sister simply facilitates the assassination of the magician by identifying him to her brother and then presumably returns to her life as a captive and rape victim: Laʒamon does not bother to describe her fate. Laʒamon’s narration presents Galarne as powerless by adding the detail that, after their brief conversation, brother and sister cannot let the king know they have spoken, “for sone heo weoren fordon ba, oðer ofslaʒen oðer anhon [for they would both have been put to death immediately, either beheaded or hanged]” had they done so (*LB* 15393). Because Brien’s sister disappears at this point in the story (as she does in Wace’s poem), she does not resemble her Galfridian counterpart who tries to free herself several times (*HRB* 196.408–11). Underscoring Laʒamon’s priorities as a translator is an episode of his own invention in which King Cadwalan rescues Brien from a siege at Exeter. When the king declares, “Arude we Brien, þe is min ibore mon [Let us deliver from captivity Brien, who is my kinsman by birth]” (*LB* 15460), his loyalty to Brien is clear. However, neither the kidnapping and rape of Brien’s sister—the king’s kinswoman—nor Galarne’s aid to her brother matters to King Cadwalan or to Laʒamon as the narrator: only the king’s male relative matters. Abandoned by both her male relatives and the poet who is translating her story, Galarne comes to occupy a narrative limbo: she is unremembered even by the king whose triumph over his rival she has made possible by facilitating the assassination of Cadwalan’s enemy, and her victimization fails to motivate her male relatives either to rescue her or to avenge her violation.³⁵

Purifying Merlin's Mother

Out of an apparent desire to create moral clarity where Geoffrey of Monmouth's history creates moral ambiguity and Wace's translation fails to eliminate it, Laȝamon takes Wace's purification of the figure of Merlin's mother a step further. Like all female figures in the *Brut*, Merlin's mother must occupy one of two categories: noble lady or whore. The first step toward achieving this moral clarity is to articulate the threat to the reputations of Merlin and his mother that the strange circumstances of the boy's birth create. Before readers meet Merlin's mother, King Vortiger's men overhear young Merlin arguing with another child. In Wace's account, a boy named Dinabuz taunts Merlin because he lacks noble lineage and has never had a father (LB 7373–84). In Laȝamon's version of events, in contrast, Dinabuz not only accuses Merlin of lacking the right to live as a “freo monnes [free man]” (LB 7773) but also brands Merlin's mother a whore: “Þi moder wes an hore, / for nuste heo næuere þene mon þat þe streonde hire on [Your mother was a whore, for she never knew the man who begat you upon her]” (LB 7773–75). If readers construe *streonde* in a way consistent with Dinabuz's accusation, as ‘copulated, or produced through sexual intercourse,’ then the non-virginal state of this nun becomes even more evident.³⁶ Dinabuz then adds another charge: Merlin has brought “sconde [disgrace]” to the community through his supernatural begetting; consequently, Dinabuz believes that God will punish Merlin by killing him that same day (LB 7776–79). Dinabuz's glee when the authorities take Merlin into custody reflects his hatred for the fatherless boy, hatred that highlights the fact that, within the *Brut*, an individual who lacks paternal ties has no identity (LB 7802–3). This unjustified blackening of the names of both Merlin's mother and her son, however, helps Laȝamon to contrast Dinabuz's ungenerous response to the situation of Merlin's mother with the generous response of King Vortiger and his sage Magan, and thereby to present her as pure.

The second step toward achieving moral clarity in this episode involves Laȝamon's use of his position as narrator to emphasize the goodness and nobility of Merlin's mother. Like Wace, Laȝamon presents this nun as possessing an excellent reputation, but he adds the dimension of her convent's high status: “Nu wes Mærlinges moder wunder mere iwurðen, / in ane haȝe munstre munchene ihaded [Now Merlin's mother had become extraordinarily virtuous, consecrated as a nun in an exalted convent]” (LB 7805–6). By assuring readers that she has embraced the religious life in a convent of the highest rank, Laȝamon prevents Dinabuz's negative comments about Merlin's mother from causing readers to dismiss her as a whore. Further enhancing her status

is Laȝamon's addition to her story of the lady's assertion, before she tells the story of Merlin's conception, of the high status that she possesses because of who her father was: "Þriddendale þis lond stod a mines fader hond; / of þan londe he wes king —cuð hit wes wide. / He wes ihaten Conaan, cnihtene lauerd [One-third of this country was in my father's hand; he was king of that land—that was known all over. He, a lord of warriors, was called Conaan]" (LB 7822–24). This assertion reinforces the narrator's presentation of Merlin's mother as possessing an authoritative social position, and it reflects her self-confidence deriving from that position. Although (as in Wace's account) she bows her head before answering the king's question regarding the conception of her son, this gesture signals pensiveness rather than shame: she bows her head and, after she has "ane lute while þohte [thought for a short while]," proceeds to speak, and does so assertively (RB 7412–13; LB 7829–30).

In Laȝamon's *Brut*, Merlin's mother exemplifies purity because she tells her story differently than her Galfridian and Wacean counterparts. First, by describing herself as fifteen years old and living with female companions at the time of Merlin's conception, Laȝamon's nun makes it clear both that she was too young to have had any experience with men, and that she was in private apartments to which men had no access (LB 7835–37). In contrast, her Wacean counterpart states that she was "alques grant nurrie [a full-grown novice]" (RB 7421), a statement that leaves open the possibility that she knew something of the world (and perhaps men, too) when she encountered Merlin's father. Second, the nun asserts that the nocturnal visitor appeared to her in her dreams—a situation over which she clearly had no control (LB 7838). Through this detail, the English poet eliminates an awkward fact present in both Geoffrey's and Wace's versions of her story: that she was awake during her encounter with the visitor (HRB 107.531–40; RB 7422–32). Third, Merlin's mother explains that this visitor took the form of a warrior dressed in gold, a form that suggests both nobility and holiness and therefore further reduces her potential blame for trusting him (LB 7839–40). This golden warrior visited his victim in a dream "alche niht [every night]" and kissed, embraced, and had sexual contact with her "ofte [often]" (LB 7841–44). However, the manner in which Merlin's mother tells her story makes its content even more convincing.

The demeanor of Merlin's mother strongly encourages readers to deem her innocent of any wrongdoing. Both the indirect manner in which she describes this sexual contact—he "eode me swiðe neh [moved very near me]" (LB 7844)—and her confession that, after so many visits, her loss of appetite and "uncuðe [unfamiliar]" (7846) bodily sensations did not

immediately tell her that she was “mid childe [with child]” (7848) reveal her complete ignorance of sexual matters. Merlin’s mother underscores her innocence by explaining that it was only “on ænde [in the end]” that she realized she was pregnant (7848). Laʒamon even grants his version of this female character a more dignified end to her storytelling than Wace does: in the *roman de Brut*, she says only that she knows no more than this and will say no more (RB 7433–34). Laʒamon, in contrast, allows her first to excuse herself graciously, saying, “La, swa ich ibedde are, nat ich namare / to suggen þe of mine sune, hu he to worulde is icume [Behold, as I pray for mercy, I do not know anything more to say about my son, about how he has come into the world]” (LB 7853–54), and then to end her story with the dignity of an innocent woman: “Þe nunne beh hire hæfde adun and hire huʒe dihte [The nun bowed her head down and composed her face]” (LB 7855). Allen offers an alternate interpretation of *hire huʒe dihte* that likewise suggests the nun’s innocence: “arranged her veil.”³⁷ Although King Vortiger’s counselor Magan asserts that Merlin was fathered by an incubus demon (LB 7881–82), he judges Merlin’s mother to be an innocent victim: “Hokerieð þan folke, / monine mon on sweuene ofte heo swencheð; / and monienne hende wimmon þurh heore cræfte kenneð anan [They trick people, often afflicting many a person in dreams; and many a virtuous woman instantly conceives a child through their sorcery]” (LB 7877–79). In Laʒamon’s translation of her story, Merlin’s mother remains “a virtuous woman” despite her impregnation by an incubus demon.

‘Bad Girls’ Become Worse

Given his aggressively judgmental style of narration, it is not surprising that Laʒamon not only perfects the innocence of the only nun among the female figures he derives from the non-Arthurian portion of the *roman de Brut* but also attributes negative traits to non-Christian female figures that, according to Wace, are neutral or only somewhat problematic. Helen of Troy, who in Wace’s poem is a neutral figure because she receives only a passing mention as the woman whom Paris “de Grece out ravi [had stolen from Greece]” (RB 13), becomes blameworthy in the *Brut* through Laʒamon’s elaboration of her story. Laʒamon labels the Trojan War as “þe wrakedome of Menelaus quene [the avenging of Menelaus’s queen]” rather than as Menelaus’s avenging the violation of his marital rights or the Greeks’ regaining their king’s or their own honor; as a result, Laʒamon’s Elene takes the blame for the Trojan War. In addition, the context of her appearance—the violent fall of Troy, the destruction of the land, and the slaughter of the Trojans—makes

the cost of avenging this woman's honor seem far too high (LB 38–40). Furthermore, the poet's description of Elene as a mere "alðeodisc wif [foreign woman]" whom Paris abducted through a *pret-wrenche*, a word that denotes 'cunning' and 'trickery,' not only dismisses her as an insufficient reason for the fall of Troy but also associates her with dishonesty (LB 41–42).³⁸ Finally, the poet expresses outrage that "for hire weoren on ane daze hund þousunt deade! [for her a hundred thousand men died in a single day!]," a comment that reinforces the readers' impression that Elene is to blame for many deaths although she lacks the value to merit them (LB 43).

Developing another minor female figure, Laȝamon elaborates upon Wace's statement that the mother of the half-Greek warrior Assaracus is a concubine with the condemnatory comment, "Hire cheap wes þe wrse! [Her value was the less!]" (RB 193; LB 194). This addition demeans Assaracus's mother just as his earlier additions demean Helen of Troy. Moreover, the mother's low status puts her son Assaracus in a different category from his brother who "under wedlac iboren, / after þen heðene tidende þe wes in þan londe [was born in wedlock, according to the heathen custom that existed in that land]" (LB 199–200). Through these female figures that appear in the opening lines of his poem, Laȝamon demonstrates his tendency to villainize non-Christian females.

When working with female figures derived from Roman mythology, Laȝamon is considerably harsher than Wace. For example, whereas Wace simply labels the goddess Diana a deceitful devil (RB 637–38), Laȝamon becomes intrusive and aggressive when discussing her. He expresses disgust at the worship of a false god, associating both Diana and her worshippers with the Devil (LB 571–85). Condemning her from the moment he introduces her, Laȝamon claims of her temple that "þe Wrse hit hafde to welden! [the Devil had it as his domain!]" (LB 572). He then stresses the falseness of this pagan goddess, claiming that her statue performs black magic: "Diana wes ihaten —þe Deouel heo luuede; / heo dude wnder craftes —þe Scucke hire fulste [It was called Diana—the Devil loved her. She did extraordinary sorcery—the Devil aided her!]" (LB 575–76). Diana's followers then receive equally strong condemnation through the claim that they learn of the future through sorcery and that, when they worship her statue, "þe Scucke hit onfeng! [the Devil accepted it!]" (LB 583). Although Laȝamon focuses on the evil inherent in pagan belief rather than on the female form of this false deity, as Wace does (RB 639–40), Diana's reputation declines to a new low point in the *Brut*.

Sea nymphs suffer a similar decline in reputation when Laȝamon transforms Wace's alluring and dangerous Sirens, from whom the Trojans

escape only with “grant peine [great difficulty]” (RB 771), into a stereotypically feminine temptation that Brutus easily overcomes. As in the *roman de Brut*, the Sirens of the *Brut* are women above the waist and fish below, sing beautifully, and make it difficult for men to escape them (RB 733–56; LB 663–68). Laʒamon, however, attributes to the Sirens the traits of seductresses: “luðere . . . craften [wicked . . . arts]” and “werkes [deeds]” that are “swa swete [so beguiling]” that men stay with them (LB 674, 668). Through “þan ufele ginnen þe cuðen þa mereminnen [the wicked skills that the mermaids exercis(e)],” they prevent sailors from leaving them (LB 670). Nevertheless, having presented the Sirens as a potential danger to Brutus and his men, the poet then dismisses these female figures. The fact that “swiða heo heom lætten mid luðere heora craften [they hindered them greatly by means of their wicked arts]” poses no threat to male supremacy, for “Brutus atræc al buten burstan, / and ferde riht on his wei [Brutus escaped entirely without injury, and traveled straight on his way]” (LB 674–76). Laʒamon’s Brutus, therefore, avoids the fate of the many sailors in Wace’s account who lose their way and demonstrates the superiority of masculine strength over feminine wiles in the *Brut*. Laʒamon’s tendency to villainize, condemn, and dismiss non-Christian female figures is likewise evident as he reshapes two female characters that play problematic but explicable roles in Geoffrey’s history, Iudon and Ronwein.

Laʒamon makes it easy for readers to condemn and reject Iudon by simplifying her as a character: Wace’s foolish and demented murderer becomes an evil, cold-blooded killer who deserves the terrible death to which she is condemned. The English poet introduces Iudon as both “riche [mighty]” and “onmære [infamous],” making a suggestive link between female power and negative outcomes from the outset (LB 1992). Although this mother retains the motive for murder she has in previous versions of her story (one son’s murder of the other), Laʒamon’s repetition of the idea that Iudon hates Poreus combines with the detail that “binimen heo him þohte his lif [she plotted to deprive him of his life]” to portray her as a calculating, rather than an impulsive, murderer (LB 1995–96). Then, when Laʒamon presents the act itself, he not only repeats Wace’s claim that the son dies in his bed—where he thought he would be absolutely safe—but also adds narratorial comments that denounce Iudon: “Ðer him muchel plihte ilomp! [Great harm happened to him there!]” and “A wurpe hire wa! [May she be cursed forever!]” (RB 2161–70; LB 1997–2002).

Narrative details strengthen the readers’ impression that a heartless Iudon executes her plan. Whereas Wace says that the murderer and her coconspirators enter her son’s bedroom with “cotels tranchanz suz lur

aisseles [sharp knives under their armpits]" with which "la gargate li unt trenchiee [they cut his throat]" and then dismember him, Laȝamon presents Iudon alone as cutting her son's throat and dismembering him: "Com is moder liðen mid leoðlichen creæften, / mid oþer six wiuen mid six longe cniuen. / Þeo uniseli moder þus hire sune murðde; / heo cærf him þene swure atwa —a wurpe hire wa! / Þe uniselie moder mid sexe hine tosnæde, / and al todælde lim from oþere [His mother strode in with deadly equipment, with six other women with six long knives. The accursed mother murdered her son thus: she cut his throat in two—may she be cursed forever! The accursed mother sliced him to shreds with a knife, and completely rent one limb from the other]" (RB 2172–76; LB 1999–2004). The use of singular pronouns and verbs here causes Iudon's accomplices to fade into the narrative background while she emerges as an evil, cold-blooded killer.

It is Laȝamon's word choice, however, that transforms Iudon into an embodiment of evil that the Britons must destroy. Having repeated the phrase *uniseli moder* 'accursed mother' (LB 2001, 2003), Laȝamon reinforces the idea that Iudon is thoroughly evil by restating Wace's comment that people talked about this act of vengeance for a long time (RB 2177–80). This restatement blames her for the civil war that followed her murder of Poreus: "Ða wes þe muchele speche 3end þat kineriche / of Iudon þere quene þa heore sone acualde, / and of þare seore3e þe isi3e wes to londe [Then there was much discussion throughout the kingdom of the queen Iudon who had slain her son, and of the calamity that was seen in the land]" (LB 2005–7). Finally, Laȝamon elaborates upon the fact that both of Iudon's sons end up dead, with the result that she becomes a force for evil of which Britain must be purged (LB 2008). Because this woman has killed her own son, her "binumen . . . monschipe on leode [honor is destroyed in the land]" and Britain is left in a terrible situation: "Ða nes þer noht of þen kunne þe mihte þis kinelond walden, / wepmon ne wifmon, bute þa seorhfulle Iudon [Then there was no one of that family, neither man nor woman, who could reign except the grieving/wretched/wicked Iudon]" (LB 2009–11). Laȝamon's use of the word *seorhfulle*—which has meanings ranging from 'grieving' or 'miserable, wretched' to 'wicked, sinful' or 'cruel, scornful'—underscores both Iudon's unworthiness to rule and her destruction of the royal line, particularly if the English poet uses it in the sense of 'sinful' or 'cruel'.³⁹

In order to complete his condemnation of Iudon, Laȝamon has her executed in a manner appropriate to her crimes: "Gumen heom igadere-den and wurpen heo to sa-grunde [Men came together and flung her to the bottom of the sea]" (LB 2012). This execution, the means of which

might derive from Welsh tradition, destroys the threat of female power that Iudon's act of revenge represents.⁴⁰ Like sailors casting overboard someone whose sins are causing God's wrath to descend upon the whole crew, the Britons cast Iudon out of Britain. By doing so, they purge the island of her sin of filicide and return their home to its 'natural,' male-controlled state.

Building upon Wace's treatment of Henguist's daughter, Laȝamon presents Hengestes's daughter as the woman whom her father uses to seduce King Vortiger and thereby undermine Britain's status as a Christian land. Rouwenne enters the *Brut* as a daughter "swiðe deore [most beloved]" to her father (LB 7114). However, her primary function is to serve as a beautiful object: she is "fairest alre þinge [the most beautiful of creatures]" (LB 7138), dressed "mid vnmete prude [with extraordinary ostentation]" (LB 7132), whom Saxon noblemen present to Vortiger. Laȝamon uses the word *þinge* to praise this young woman, but the fact that the word can denote 'that which is held in possession' suggests her status as an object that the king will soon desire.⁴¹ Despite the fact that her initial presentation opens the way for the poet to present Rouwenne as a victim of circumstance, he chooses to demonize her.

Laȝamon's Rouwenne is a significantly more aggressive version of her Wacean counterpart. Although her beauty and attire liken her to Wace's Ronwen, Rouwenne performs several actions that facilitate her seduction of Vortiger (RB 6948). Whereas in Geoffrey's version of this story the king orders Ronwein to drink, takes the goblet from her hand, and kisses her before he drinks, in Laȝamon's version, Rouwenne takes action both to intoxicate Vortiger and to encourage his lustful gaze (HRB 100.353–54). The kiss she gives the king in the *roman de Brut* becomes a series of seductive behaviors: after she drinks some wine, she has the cup refilled for the king, hands the cup to him, and kisses him three times (RB 6974; LB 7161–62). Rouwenne then sits down next to the king, drawing his gaze; consequently, Vortiger strongly desires her (LB 7165–66). Given that Wace has the young woman kiss the king only once and then stand before him rather than sit next to him, Laȝamon's Rouwenne displays more sexual aggression than either her Wacean counterpart or King Vortiger himself (RB 6974, 6985). To underscore the seductress's power, the English poet transforms what in the *roman de Brut* is simply great desire on the king's part into an irresistible attraction: "Al his mod and his main hælde to þan mæidene [All his mind and bodily power urged him toward the maiden]" (RB 6987–88; LB 7168). This attraction causes Vortiger to kiss and embrace Rouwenne often (LB 7165–68). Because her aggressive behavior arouses desire in

the king, Rouwenne poses a greater threat than her Wacean counterpart to Christian Britons.

In order to emphasize the threat that Rouwenne poses to the Christian faith in early Britain, Laȝamon presents the marriage ceremony that joins her to King Vortiger as constituting sacrilege, the consummation of their union as polluting the king's body and damning his soul, and the king's love for his pagan wife as harming the entire country. Sharpening the contrast between Christian and pagan marriage ceremonies, Laȝamon develops Wace's comment about the lack of priest, holy Mass, and Christian prayer at this royal wedding (*RB* 7011–12). Laȝamon not only obsessively repeats this contrast but also underscores the sacrilegious nature of the pagan ceremony using multiple negation: "He imakede heo to quene / al after þan laȝen þe stoden an hæðene dæȝen. / *Nes þer nan Cristindom þer þe king þat maide nom, / ne preost ne na biscop, ne nauere ihanded Godes boc; / ah an hæðene wune he heo wedde, and brohte heo to his bedde* [He made her queen, completely in conformity with the religious rites that existed in heathen days. There was *no* Christian rite *at all* where the king took possession of the young woman, *no* priest *nor* bishop, *nor* was God's book touched *at all*. On the contrary, he wedded her according to heathen practice and brought her to his bed]" (*LB* 7178–82, my emphasis). Having gone to greater lengths than Wace to define the marriage as sacrilegious, Laȝamon then demonizes Rouwenne by presenting intercourse with her as polluting the king's body: "Maiden he heo hæfde, and mæȝeue hire bitahte; / þa he hine an hire hafde iscend, he hire ȝef Londen and Kent [He took her, a virgin, and bestowed on her a morning-gift; when he had corrupted himself with her, he gave her London and Kent]" (*LB* 7183–84). Finally, by transforming into direct speech Wace's narration of the Britons' protest against the impending pagan takeover, Laȝamon forcefully expresses the ideas that King Vortiger has "biwunnen hærm and muchele sunnen [brought damage and many sins]" upon himself, and that these pagan invaders will require the king to abandon Christianity and thereby will cause his soul to "siȝen to helle [sink down to hell]" (*RB* 7067–74; *LB* 7265, 7281). This punishment will show that he has "aboht [paid a high price]" for loving his bride (*LB* 7282).

Although Vortiger's love for Rouwenne is, according to the *Brut*, equivalent to selling his soul, it is Vortiger's betrayal of his people rather than the pollution of his body and loss of his soul that elicits Laȝamon's greatest ire. Although *The History of the Kings of Britain*, the *roman de Brut*, and the *Brut* all state that the Devil causes the king to desire a pagan wife, only Laȝamon's narration expresses outrage: "Pat wes swiðe

ladlic þing, þat þe Cristine king / luuede þat hæðene maide leoden
to hærmel! [That was a very contemptible thing, that the Christian king
loved that heathen girl to the ruin of the nation!]" (*LB* 7172–73).⁴² By
making Rouwenne "leof, æfne alse his aʒene lif [as dear as his own
life]" to Vortiger, Laʒamon underscores that the king puts his wife before
the good of his people (*LB* 7174).

In addition to condemning Rouwenne as the embodiment of a faith
that corrupts King Vortiger both body and soul, Laʒamon encourages
readers to reject her as wholly other by portraying her as a wicked step-
mother and cold-blooded murderer. Developing Wace's straightfor-
ward statement that Vortigern's three sons had a mother who died (*RB*
7025–26), the English poet derides Rouwenne as a pagan stepmother:
"Heore moder wes þa dæd, þeruore heo hafden þe lasse ræd. / Here
moder wes swiðe god wif and ladde swiðe Cristin lif; / and heore
steopmoder hæðene, Hengestes dohter [Their mother was then dead;
therefore, they had less counsel. Their mother had been a very pious
woman and led a very Christian life, and their stepmother, Hengestes's
daughter, was heathen]" (*LB* 7195–97). Laʒamon then expands Wace's
eight-line description of how this woman who, out of hate and envy,
has her stepson poisoned into more than sixty long lines that depict her
as a calculating and treacherous stepmother who kills the victim her-
self (*RB* 7153–60; *LB* 7434–97). Using both the Britons' comments and
King Vortimer's confirmation that Hengestes used his daughter so that
Vortiger could be "biswak [deluded / led into sin]" and induced to aban-
don Christianity for "hæðene laʒen [heathen rites]," Laʒamon continues
to attack the pagan seductress (*LB* 7417–20). Unlike Wace who presents
only the fact of the poisoning, Laʒamon presents Rouwenne as deceiv-
ing both her stepson and her husband as well as carefully creating the
conditions under which she can kill her stepson. According to the *Brut*,
the pagan queen is a schemer who takes the time to plan how she will
avenge her father's defeat and her kinsmen's deaths (*LB* 7434–35). She
then obtains King Vortimer's permission to remain in Britain by agreeing
to practice Christianity (*LB* 7436–43).

As Laʒamon develops his portrait of Rouwenne, however, he uses nar-
ratorial interjections to draw greater attention to this queen's treachery
than Wace's use of the imperative mood can. Whereas Wace narrates
with restraint, "Quant la lei Deu fu restablie / E Bretaine reconvertie, /
Oez cum faite deablie [When God's law was re-established and Britain
again converted, hear what devilry was perpetrated]" (*RB* 7153–55),
Laʒamon expresses outrage. The English poet's narration positions him
as an observer of events who laments an honest king's death at the hands
of an evil, cold-hearted woman: "Ah wale þat Uortimer of hire þonke

næs wær; / wale þat þe gode king of hire þonke nuste naþing / þat he nuste þene swikedom þe þohte þa luðere wimman! [But alas that Vortimer was not aware of her thoughts; alas that the good king knew nothing of her intentions, that he knew nothing of the betrayal that the evil woman planned!]” (LB 7444–46).

Making Rouwenne’s act of betrayal all the more terrible are the circumstances under which she commits it. She comes to King Vortimer seemingly ready to “wel don, vnderuongen þene Cristindom [act morally, to accept Christianity],” greeting him “uæire [courteously]” and stating her intention to become a Christian whenever he chooses (LB 7449–54). In his joy, the king believes “þat hit weore soð þat þeo scaðe sæide [that it was true, what the evil female said],” but the way in which the narration refers to her foreshadows her terrible deed (LB 7456). In committing it, Rouwenne adds two further dimensions to her treachery. She poisons a cup of Vortimer’s favorite wine, and she gains access to this cup by causing him to laugh in response to a seemingly kind-hearted act: she wishes him good health and declares that he has made her *swiðe uæin*, a phrase that denotes great joy as well as eagerness to do something—in this case (as the king believes) to convert (LB 7462–83). These circumstances, along with others, make Hengestes’s daughter both more deceptive and more wicked than her Galfridian and Wacean counterparts.

Additional circumstances confirm that Rouwenne is consistently deceptive and therefore thoroughly evil. She not only hides the poison in the most womanly of hiding places—“in hire bosme . . . bineoðen hire titten [in her bosom, . . . underneath her breasts]”—but also poisons the cup while King Vortimer is laughing (LB 7476–83). Given the play on words that Anglo-Saxonist Kelley M. Wickham-Crowley has identified in the phrase *atter . . . cuppe / atorcoppe* ‘poison head’ (LB 7481–82), which integrates the Anglo-Saxon word for spider into the description of the poisoning in order to liken Rouwenne to this poisonous creature, the poet must have thought carefully about how best to villainize this female figure.⁴³ Having poisoned the king, Rouwenne commits a final act of deception by stealing away from the city of Thongchester during the night, but only after sending servants to misinform her husband Vortiger that Vortimer is preparing to attack him (LB 7491–97). Through all of her actions, Laȝamon’s version of this female figure earns the title she receives at the end of her story, “þa ufele Rouwenne [the evil Rouwenne]” (LB 7489). His translation consistently encourages readers to reject her as both socially and theologically other.

Using narratorial comments as well as character development, Laȝamon likewise condemns King Leir’s elder daughters—along with

all womankind—much more strongly than Wace condemns them. His decision to omit the rebellion of Leir's sons-in-law enables him to portray Gornoille and Regau as the villains of the story.⁴⁴ Although Laʒamon introduces his Gornoille as “guðfulle [excellent],” he emphasizes the eldest daughter's deception of her father: he has King Leir command her to speak “soðere worden [with truthful words]” before she claims to love her father more than her own life, has Gornoille end her speech with the declaration “þu mith me wel ileue [you can truly believe me],” and adds the narratorial comment that Leir “ilefde his doster læisinge [believed his daughter's lying]” (LB 1476–89). While developing this initial portrait of Gornoille, however, Laʒamon condemns womankind along with her: “Gornoille was swiðe wær, swa beoð wifmen wel ihwær [Gornoille was very wary, as women are practically everywhere]” (LB 1482). As Alamichel has observed, this poet chooses to insert his opinion regarding the behavior of the two evil princesses rather than “rapporter objectivement [report objectively].”⁴⁵ The fact that *ihwær* also means ‘on all occasions’ intensifies this condemnation of womankind.⁴⁶ Later on, Leir's eldest daughter becomes an Eve when she tries to convince her husband to violate the agreement he has made with his lord and king. Complaining to her husband in bed, Gornoille apparently uses their physical intimacy as a means of trying to manipulate Maglaunus into reducing the size of the king's retinue (LB 1639–41).

Although she raises the same issues as her counterpart in the *roman de Brut*, that her father lacks mental competence and the members of his retinue are troublesome, Laʒamon's Gornoille proves herself to be harsher than her Wacean counterpart (RB 1858–78). She dismisses her father as a crazy old man unworthy of the dignity that a large retinue confers on him: “Me þuncheð þat mi fæder nis nowhit felle, / no he wurhscipe ne can, his wit he hauet bileued. / Me þuncheð þe alde mon wole dotie nou nan [It seems to me that my father is by no means fit (to reign): he has no worthiness; he has taken leave of his senses. It seems to me that the old man will soon be senile]” (LB 1643–45). Furthermore, Laʒamon draws attention to how distasteful her behavior is by developing Maglaunus as a character. Gornoille's husband criticizes her sharply, saying, “Leiuedi, þu haues mochel wouh; nauest þu richedom inoh? [Lady, you speak unjustly. Do you not have wealth/sovereignty enough?]” (LB 1662). After he has faulted her attitude toward her father and used the word *richedom* to critique her greedy desire for both wealth and power, Maglaunus proposes the humane and honorable alternative to her plan: to keep her father comfortable and allow him to manage his retinue as he likes until, through his death, Leir gives the two of them ownership of half the kingdom (LB 1664–68).⁴⁷ Ignoring this reasonable

advice, however, Gornioille chooses to dismiss many of her father's followers "mid hire ginne [with her trickery]" (LB 1671). The immediate response of her father to this action—cursing the man who gives his child land while he is still able to govern it—only confirms Gornioille's status as an evil, greedy daughter (LB 1678–83).

Wace's Ragau likewise becomes more obviously evil in Laʒamon's account, despite the fact that her husband and brother-in-law—not she and her sister—wield the political power. The *Brut's* Regau is like Gornioille both in possessing a woman's "rætfulle [prudent]" way with words and in using that feminine gift to claim that even one limb of her father's is more precious to her than her own life (LB 1502–4). As readers might expect given how Laʒamon develops her sister as a character, the poet brands Regau a deceiver by commenting, "Ah heo ne seide naþing soð, no more þenne hiire suster [However, she did not say anything truthful, no more than her sister did]" (LB 1505). When her father comes to her with his thirty retainers, Regau argues that she and her husband should dismiss twenty of these men for two reasons: they consume her household supplies, and the situation is displeasing to her (LB 1689–91). Although her husband Duke Hemeri accepts this argument, Laʒamon's narration asserts that—by agreeing with his wife—the duke has "his alde fader biswake [betrayed his old father]" (LB 1694). After the duke declares that Leir will have no more than five men, he and Regau strip the old king of all but this small remnant (LB 1698–1700). Leir's bemoaning his situation both before and after Gornioille leaves him with just a single retainer, along with the length of his two speeches, underscores the cruelty of both daughters (LB 1704–18, 1726–46).

Nevertheless, these two characters—despite their evil ways—are finally mere females whose only option is to try to influence those in whom real power resides: their husbands. Laʒamon's phrasing leaves no doubt that it is Maglaunus and Hemeri who make, and later break, an agreement with Leir. Gornioille and Regau receive no mention, either when "þe Scottene king and þe duk speken togaðere / mid heore stil rune nome hem to reda / þat heo wolden al þis lond habben on heora hond [the Scottish king and the duke speak together and, in their hidden secret-place, take counsel that they would have this entire land in their hands]" in exchange for maintaining the king's full retinue, or when these men choose "tobreken [to violate]" that agreement (LB 1621–30). The political irrelevance of Gornioille and Regau, however, is just one example of how Laʒamon develops female figures ultimately derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's history in ways that systematically strip them of political power.

Queen Consorts Contained

Although Laʒamon's focus on the victimization rather than the heroism of female figures and his demonization of both particular female figures and women in general constitute two aspects of his misogynistic presentation of the early British past, his careful containment of politically significant and potentially powerful queen consorts constitutes a third. Aeneas's first wife Creusa makes a brief appearance in Laʒamon's *Brut*, just as she does in the *roman de Brut*, but in the English poem she becomes a narrative afterthought. Unlike Wace who gives his Creüsa's death the same narrative weight as her son's escape with Eneas (RB 81–88), Laʒamon mentions this female figure at the end of his explanation of the fact that the Trojan hero had two sons by different mothers: Asscanius by Creusa and Siluius Eneas by Lauine (LB 104–9). Creusa's narrative importance then erodes further through the way in which the English poet phrases her loss: "His moder wes ihoten Creusa, Priames kinges dohter, / þe Eneas his fader in Troie forleas / inne þane fehte —his feon heo him binomen [His mother, King Priam's daughter, was named Creusa whom his father Eneas had lost disastrously at Troy—his enemies having taken her from him]" (LB 107–9). This revision of Laʒamon's sources makes her a piece of war booty, a footnote to the deeds of males. In short, both Creusa's casual manner of inclusion and her status as property devalue her. Also appearing in the *Brut* is Lauine's mother. She objects to her daughter's marriage to Eneas, just as she does in the *roman de Brut* (RB 44). However, Laʒamon's phrasing reveals that the queen is powerless to affect, let alone change, her husband's decision: "Þare quene hit ofþouhte —noþeles heo hit þolede [This grieved the queen; nevertheless, she endured it]" (LB 72). According to the *Brut*, Lauine's mother has no choice but to accept her husband's decision—whether or not she agrees with it.

When Laʒamon retells the story of Aeneas's second wife, Lavinia, she becomes as powerless as her mother. While retaining his French source's portrait of her as an object of exchange, the English poet denies her access to political power. Like Wace, he presents his Lavinia figure as an object exchanged between her father and her husband, but he is crasser in his treatment of her. Whereas Wace says that Eneas "la feme e l'onour quatre anz tint [held his wife and domain for four years]," Laʒamon states, "Eneas Lauine heuede inomen and þa leodene biwnnen [Eneas had seized Lauine and acquired the land]" (RB 73; LB 95). Laʒamon also denies to Lauine the position of heir to her father's property and power. In contrast to Wace who asserts, "Après lui deveit tut avoir [She would have everything after his death]" (RB 48), the English poet positions Eneas—not his wife—as the heir of King Latin's property and power: "Eneam he heo

biheyte to habben to wife, / and after his daye al his drihliche lond, / for he nefde nenne sune —þe sarure was his heorte [To Eneas he promised her, to have as his wife, and (after his reign) all of his kingdom, for he had no son—the sadder was his heart]” (*LB* 74–76). In Laʒamon’s version of events, Eneas will have everything upon his father-in-law’s death: there is no mention of the possibility of Lauine’s inheriting anything. Moreover, her father’s deep regret that he lacks a son causes Lauine to lose any political significance. Although Laʒamon’s translation of Lavinia’s story eliminates the clash in Wace’s version of events between Lavine’s nontraditional inheritance of all her father’s holdings and her traditional function as the conduit through which her father transfers his realm to her husband, it typifies his revision process in that it demeans a female figure with the potential to wield political power. Additional modifications to Wace’s version of events assign to Laʒamon’s Lauine the traditional female roles of love-object, queen consort, and mother that decrease her access to political and cultural power.

Laʒamon adds a number of details that emphasize Lauine’s role as the object of several men’s love. For example, by adding the comment that “þe king heuede ane douter þe him was swiþe deore [the king had a daughter who was very dear to him],” the poet makes her the object of her father’s love (*LB* 73). Moreover, by expanding Wace’s description of Turnus’s mortification at and jealousy of Eneas’s marriage to Lavine so that Turnus’s love for her causes him to become “idrefed [plagued]” “mid teonen [with sorrow]” rather than to experience mere sadness, the poet emphasizes her role as Turnus’s love-object (*RB* 53–58; *LB* 87). When Laʒamon expands Wace’s descriptions first of Eneas and Lavine’s marriage and then of Eneas’s naming a fortress for her, his Lauine becomes her husband’s love-object.

These details, however, combine to domesticate Lauine fully, thereby making her an ideal queen consort: “Eneas nom Lauine leofliche to wife; / he wes king and heo quen, and kinelond heo welden / inne griðe and inne friðe and freoliche loueden [Eneas took Lauine lovingly as his wife; he was king and she queen, and they reigned over the kingdom in peace and prosperity and loved each other passionately]” (*LB* 92–94). Furthermore, when he describes the naming of the fortress of Lauinion, the English poet provides love as Eneas’s motive for naming this place after his wife: “Lauine hehte his leuemon; þene castel he clepede Lauinion— / þat wes for hire wordscipe, wel þat he hire uþe [His beloved was named Lauine; he called the fortress Lauinion—that was in her honor, for he had great regard for her]” (*LB* 97–98). Although Laʒamon adds the idea of mutual love to this story, this love makes Eneas’s acquisition of absolute power over the kingdom seem justified,

even natural. In addition, by making a clear distinction, as Wace does, between the roles of king and queen, Laȝamon emphasizes that Lauine's inheritance is now her husband's property (*RB* 63–66; *LB* 93–98). This union is based on love, but it is not based on equality.

By adding and altering other details, Laȝamon denies to his Lauine her Wacean status as cofounder of Rome. First he defines Lauine as a future queen consort who is not only lovely but also receptive to men's advances: "Ƞat maiden wes ihoten Lauine; seȝen heo wes leodena quene. / Feier wes ȝe wimmon and wunsum hire monnen [The young woman was named Lauine; later she was queen of the people. She was a beautiful woman and favorably disposed to men]" (*LB* 77–78). Then he defines Lauine as a mother, not a cofounder of Rome, by modifying Wace's account. Laȝamon refers to the son of Eneas and Lauine as Siluius Eneas rather than as Silvius Posthumus, as in Wace's account; this choice of name links the son to Lauine's husband rather than to her (*RB* 80; *LB* 103). As a result, paternity defines this son's identity. By adding the detail that, soon after her husband's death, Lauine "ænne sune hefde to froure [had a son as solace]," the poet signals the mother's lesser importance (*LB* 102).

Laȝamon's other modifications cost Lauine her position as the apparent guardian of Trojan culture and undermine her power as a ruler. Instead of having the statues of the Trojan gods mysteriously reappear in Lavinium, as they do in the *roman de Brut* (*RB* 97–104), the English poet has the idol the Trojans worship disappear with the Devil's aid: "Ah sone he ȝonene iuatte; / forð aȝein mid ȝan winde ȝe Feond hine ferede [But soon he took it away from that place. The Devil carried it away again with the wind]" (*LB* 119–20). Consequently, Lauine can have no role as a guardian of Trojan culture. In addition, although Laȝamon's Lauine is like Wace's Lavine in that her stepson gives her both the city of Alba Longa and the fortress of Lauinion to rule until her death, the *Brut* subtly alters the story in ways that make Lauine seem less important than she is in the *roman de Brut* (*RB* 89–96; *LB* 110–16). First, by adding the detail that Asscanius makes this gift to his stepmother "for ȝon lofe of his broȝer [out of love of his brother]" (*LB* 113), the poet transforms Lauine's power into a way for one man to show affection for another man rather than a way for a stepson to show respect for his stepmother. Second, by reminding readers that the stronghold called Lauinion is one "ȝe his fader hefde imaked [which his father had built]" (*LB* 115), the poet underscores the fact that Asscanius and his father Eneas are city-builders while Lauine is merely a temporary custodian of what they have built. Laȝamon appears to do all he can to minimize this female figure's political power.

When Laȝamon re-presents Brutus's wife Innogin, he honors and expands Wace's version of events; however, because her father's affection

for her displaces that of her husband, Ignogen's primary function is to serve as a piece of property whose exchange achieves peace and to which Trojan men respond with materialistic and misogynistic thoughts. Although Laȝamon enhances the value of this female figure, whom he calls Ignogen, by labeling her the "leoue dohter [beloved daughter]" and "bearn deora [dear child]" of her father King Pandrasus, she enters the *Brut's* version of the British past as a source of wealth rather than a potential object of Brutus's affection (LB 527, 547). Laȝamon's Brutus expresses no feelings at all about his wife, but he feels "muchel...blisse [great...joy]" after receiving ships full of goods, along with Ignogen, from her father (LB 550). His primary concern is that "al þat forward wes ilest [the whole agreement was fulfilled]" through the king's transfer of goods to him (LB 548). Furthermore, by presenting Ignogen immediately before the list of all the goods the Trojans wish Pandrasus to give them, Laȝamon makes her one among many spoils of war. The fact that the *Brut's* King Pandrasus expresses the same hatred for Brutus as his Wacean counterpart makes this female figure a peaceweaver, thereby likening her to a type of female character common in Anglo-Saxon literature (RB 575–80; LB 524–35). The king offers his daughter, a third of his land, and freedom for the Trojans in order that the Greeks and Trojans can remain linked by close kin ties and live together (LB 534–35).

Ignogen's role as an object of exchange, however, is more prominent here than in the *roman de Brut*. Laȝamon emphasizes the idea of an exchange of goods from the start, replacing Wace's description of how Brutus's men disagree (some advising settling on a portion of Pandrasus's land and others advising that the Greek king allow them to seek other realms) with direct speech that makes the acquisition of goods the Trojans' primary goal: "Ȝeue us þe king and al his gold and þa maðmes of his lond, / ȝef us peal, ȝeue us hors, ȝeue us haihe scrud, / ȝeue us ænne ende of his kinelonde, / ȝeue us ȝislæs þerto, and þis mei beon wel idon [Give us the king and all his gold and the treasures of his land, give us fine horse-trappings, give us horses, give us splendid clothes, give us a portion of his kingdom, give us hostages as part of this pact, and this can be achieved appropriately]" (LB 450–53). Laȝamon's use of anaphora here—a half-dozen 'give-us' constructions in four lines—underscores their acquisitiveness, as does his rephrasing of the opinion of Brutus's advisor Menbritius that Pandrasus should give them gold and silver, ships, grain, and "quanque ad mestier / As nés conduire e a mangier [whatever (they) need to eat and to steer the ships]" (RB 521–22) so that the Trojans can acquire much more than they need. As a result, the advice that Brutus acts on becomes this: that Pandrasus "of his corne he us ȝeue swa muchel þat we beon iquemed, / gold and

garsume and his gode hors, / and al his beste mæte-cun þe his men habbeð, / and alle þa liðinde scipen þe on his londe beoð, / and alle þat bihoueð þa scipen to driuen, / of monnen and of wapnen, þat we mawen wel faren [give us as much of his corn as pleases us, give us gold and treasures and his good horses, and all the best supplies that his people possess, and all the sailing ships that are in his land, and all that is necessary to sail the ships, men and weapons so that we may travel well]" (LB 471–76).

Ignogen's primary role as an object of exchange becomes evident when Laʒamon rephrases Menbritius's suggestion—"Doinst al duc, nostre seinnor, / Innorgen, sa fille, a oisur [Let him give our lord the duke Innorgen, his daughter, to wife]" (RB 523–24)—in crass terms: "ʒurne we his dohter, / þat he heo ʒeue ure lauerde Brutun to his bedde [Let us ask for his daughter, that he give her to our lord Brutus for his bed]" (LB 469–70). Like Brutus, his men view the king's daughter as something to be used, although they emphasize the sexual pleasure and presumably children she can provide rather than the material goods her acquisition entails. In the *Brut*, a marriage that—in Geoffrey's history—has a loving dimension becomes a means for Brutus to get rich and beget offspring, and a female figure whose Galfridian counterpart elicits her husband's sympathy inspires only crassly materialistic and misogynistic talk among Trojan males.

When Laʒamon translates Wace's version of the story of Tonwenna, he transforms her from a problematically pathetic and manipulative figure into a dignified peaceweaver. When readers compare how the two poets develop Geoffrey's female figure, they will notice that whereas Wace uses nearly ninety octosyllabic lines to present the mother's speech to her rebellious son, Laʒamon uses only thirty of his long lines; consequently, Laʒamon's Tonuenne loses narrative ground to her sons (RB 2729–816; LB 2501–30). Nevertheless, in the *Brut*, Tonuenne regains the honorable status she originally possessed in Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* although now as an Anglo-Saxon-style peaceweaver. According to Laʒamon, Tonuenne is an "ælde quene [old queen]" but "a wifmon wis and kene [a wise and brave woman]" (LB 2488) who demonstrates her wisdom by dressing as a beggar in order to draw Brennes's attention more effectively: "Heo nom hire on anne curtel þe wes swiðe totoren, / hire hem heo up itæh —hire cneon he wes swiðe neh— / heo eode on hire bare foten; al heo hit dude for gode [She put on a garment that was very tattered, drew her hem up—it was very near her knees—(and) walked on her bare feet. She did all of this in order to accomplish good]" (LB 2491–93). Despite her costume, however, Laʒamon's Tonuenne possesses dignity that Wace's Toruenne lacks for several reasons: the mother's

search for her son becomes determined rather than frantic, her acknowledgment of her bare breasts and stomach while addressing her son does not entail the narrator's stating that she strips to the waist, her breasts are no longer "flaistres de vieillesce e pelues [withered and hairy with age]" (*RB* 2724), and her formerly hysterical sobbing becomes affectionate hugging and kissing of her son (*RB* 2718–28; *LB* 2488–500).

Tonuenne's manner of speaking is both dignified and persuasive. When she addresses Brennes, Tonuenne appeals to his sense of honor rather than his pity saying, "Biðenc o ðire monshipe, biðenc o ðire moder, / biðenc a mire lare [Be mindful of your honor, be mindful of your mother, be mindful of my counsel]" (*LB* 2504–5). Although she uses the sight of her breasts to remind Brennes that he is her son just as Belin is, she continues to appeal to his sense of honor by stating that, should he bring "scome [disgrace]" upon her through his behavior, she will "ofstinge [stab (herself) to death]" with a knife (*LB* 2509–10). This threat gains additional force when, by putting Belin in the position of king and father, Tonuenne implies that Brennes's rebellion could result in the death of his 'father' as well as his mother.⁴⁸ Having threatened to commit suicide to preserve her honor, Tonuenne then makes a stronger argument against Brennes than her Wacean counterpart makes. Instead of arguing indirectly by stating that her old body cannot produce any more children, she presents a straightforward case: Brennes has sworn oaths to his brother as his liege-lord that he has broken, has gone abroad without his brother's permission with the intention of gathering the troops to attack his brother, and has committed the ultimate betrayal in waging war in his homeland, for "ne sculde na cniht hærzien þær he hauede hames iwald, / no eæft on his cuhðe quedschipe wurchen [no warrior should ever wage war in his native land where he had ruled at home, nor afterwards perpetrate wickedness upon his homeland]" (*RB* 2750–52; *LB* 2525–26). Finally, Tonuenne articulates Christian values—despite the fact that the poet marks her sons as worshippers of the god Dagon (*LB* 2694–95). Instead of asking her son to trust that, if he sets his anger aside, so will his brother, she invokes the Christian values of humility and love. She tells him, "leie adun þin hære-scrud [lay your harsh thoughts down]," "ilef þire moder and leoue þinne broðer [put trust in your mother, and love your brother]" (*RB* 2812–16; *LB* 2528, 2530). By developing her as he does, Laʒamon restores to this character the dignity and persuasiveness that Wace took away from her.

Despite her persuasiveness, however, Tonuenne in no way challenges her sons' power: she knows her place. This peaceweaver wins Brennes's compliance through an appeal to honor, but when she appeals to both of her sons, she does so "milde mid muðe [gently with her mouth],"

a description that suggests ladylike conduct (*LB* 2539). Furthermore, because she is a former queen, her request for peace neither decreases her sons' honor nor challenges their power: "Cnihtes 3it beoð boðe kene, while ich wes quene: / nis hit noht unhuhtlic incker moder inc hateð [You are both courageous warriors while I was once queen: it is not at all unseemly to do what your mother commands you]" (*LB* 2543–44). Finally, by adding to this episode a conclusion of his own creation in which the Britons celebrate peace with trumpets and songs of joy (*LB* 2547–49). Laʒamon underscores Tonuene's role as peace-weaver rather than her changing the course of British history by making her sons' conquest of Rome possible. The *Brut*'s expanded account of Belin and Brennes's conquest of Rome returns the narrative focus to where it tends to remain in this poem, on the battlefield; as a result, their mother's intervention fades quickly from view. Laʒamon phrases the end of Tonuene's story in a manner that starts this shift in narrative focus away from the mother and toward her sons: "Þus iwerað Brennes sæht whit his broðer [In such a way, Brennes became reconciled with his brother]" (*LB* 2550). This passive construction reveals what is important: the brothers' making peace, not the fact that their mother brought it about.

Although Laʒamon expands Wace's account of Queen Genuis, his process of translation denies this character access to either the political power or the historical significance that Geoffrey of Monmouth originally assigned to his Queen Gewissa. Laʒamon's Queen Genuis lacks political power because her role as a token of exchange becomes her primary one in Laʒamon's version of her story. The *Brut* emphasizes Genuis's primary role by giving her father a lengthy speech before he introduces his daughter as part of the peace bargain. In this speech, Emperor Claudien asserts his determination either to win Rome's tributary rights in battle or to ensure them through a marriage: "Ich 3ifuen him mine dohter Genuis / to sibben and to some —þe bet wit mawen libben [I will give him my daughter Genuis for the sake of peaceful relations and concord—the better can we two live]" (*LB* 4722–47, 4743–44). Laʒamon further underscores the maiden's status as a token of exchange both by stating twice that her father gives her to Aruiragus, and by using wording that describes how her transfer forges a bond between her father and husband. The first time, the English poet says that "Claudien þe kæisere 3æf heo þisse kinge; / 3et hit is ene þat heo wes her quene, / þat þe king Aruiragus to quene hæfde Genuis [the emperor Claudien gave her to this king. To this day it remains apparent that she was queen here, that King Aruiragus had Genuis as his queen]," and the second time he states, "Þat maiden wes iwedded; þe king heo hæfde to bedde. / Muchel wes þa

blisse þe wes þanne i Bruttene / mid þan kinge Aruiragus and þæn kæisere Claudius [The young woman was married; the king took her to bed. Great was the joy that was then in Britain with King Aruiragus and the emperor Claudien]" (LB 4760–62, 4771–73). In this way, Laʒamon completes Wace's partial transformation of a Galfridian marriage founded on a king's passion for his wife into a business transaction; by doing so, the English poet denies Genuis any historical significance.

Like Wace, Laʒamon explains that the commemoration of this transaction—the naming of the city later known as Gloucester—honors the emperor of Rome rather than his daughter (RB 5071–76; LB 4780–82). In addition, however, Laʒamon's account departs from its French source in reconciling two possible origins of the city's name (the emperor and the son he begets at Gloucester), with the result that he glorifies both men at Genuis's expense. Laʒamon shifts the emphasis away from her, first by underscoring the importance of her father: "Claudien þe heʒe Kairclou heo hehte, / ac nas hit noht longe þat þe nome moste stonden, / ac for Claudiusses wurðscipe swa wes þe nome iqueðen [Claudien the great named it Kærclou, but it was not long that the name could stand although for Claudien's honor so was the name proclaimed]" (LB 4783–85). Laʒamon then adds a passage about Claudien's son extensive enough to push Genuis into the background of the story: he inserts information not only about the emperor's love for a beautiful and wise virgin whom his men have captured, but also about the son's birth: "Wel wes Claudiene þerforen [Claudien was happy because of that]" (LB 4786–94). Continuing to focus on this son, the poet explains both that the child receives the name of Gloi at his baptism in the pagan tradition and why the city bears the boy's name: "And Claudien him bitæhte þa burh þe he ahte, / . . . and heoten heo Gloichestre / al for his sune luuen þe leof him wes an heorten, / þe seoððe biʒæt al Walisc lond to his aʒere hond; / and þerof he wes deme and duc feole ʒere [And Claudien granted to (Gloi) the city that he possessed . . . and gave it the name Gloucester entirely out of love for his son who was dear to his heart, who subsequently gained control over all Welsh territories, and he was ruler and sovereign lord of it for many years]" (LB 4795–97, 4799–4804). Laʒamon's account makes the love of a father for his son the only love mentioned in the plot sequence that includes Genuis, and it emphasizes the political power of her father, husband, son, and husband's counselors in contrast to her lack of it. As a result, Genuis becomes another peaceweaving queen cast in the Anglo-Saxon mold whose role remains marginal: she rules with her husband, but her husband has every reason to feel "þat him ne derede naðing [that nothing did him harm]" (LB 4815).

When readers compare Laȝamon's Genuis to Wace's Genuis, Genuis's long speech to her husband Aruiragus stands out as the English poet's most significant addition to this queen consort's story; nevertheless, both its content and its position in the narrative sequence make it clear that Queen Genuis lacks the power to influence her husband significantly (LB 4895–914). The speech's content defines the queen as a peacemaker of an Anglo-Saxon sort. She calls upon her husband to demonstrate his "mucle treowscepe [great integrity]" and "treowðe staðeluæste [steadfast fidelity]" and encourages him to avoid the inevitable killing of kinsman by kinsman that will result from this war—killing that will produce either enmity between Aruiragus and their son (in the event that Aruiragus kills Genuis's kinsmen) or between Genuis and their son (in the event that her son Maurius kills Aruiragus and his kinsmen) (LB 4896, 4903–8). Her referring to Maurius first as her husband's son, and then as her son, only reinforces Genuis's point that both she and her son have kinship ties to the Roman as well as to the British combatants (LB 4905, 4908). In addition to making this plea based on kinship, she appeals to her husband's sense of honor: Aruiragus promised to pay tribute to Rome throughout his lifetime when he reconciled with her father (LB 4909–14). The impact of her wise words, however, appears to be minimal for two reasons. One is that the king does not respond to her speech directly; instead, he stays up all night with his counselors debating what he should do, despite the fact that these men can offer no advice "þe heom þuhte al swa god / swa heom þuhte þe soðe quides of þere quene [that seemed to them as good as the true utterances of their queen seemed]" (LB 4918–19). The other is that, on the following morning, the king and his warriors arm and charge the enemy "alswa heo wolden fehten [as if they intended to fight]" (LB 4921). Apparently, Genuis's lengthy speech does not persuade Aruiragus to end his war against Rome.

Additional details ensure that readers perceive Genuis as only partially successful in her peacemaking. Although her second intervention achieves peace, for she "somnede cnihtes, / þa ær weoren ifeonde makede heom to fronde [assembled the warriors, making those who earlier were enemies into friends]" (LB 4924–25), Laȝamon does not allow his readers to hear the words that bring about that truce. Consequently, the *Brut* dwells on the queen's diplomatic failure rather than on her success. Furthermore, as in the *roman de Brut*, this queen's long-term impact on her husband is minimal: she obtains his promise that he will keep his oath, but she does not spur him to become a better man and king as she does in Geoffrey's account (HRB 69.361–69; RB 5147–52; LB 4926–27). The cause of her lack of persuasive power is Laȝamon's omission of both Wace's mention of her exalted birth, which gives her the status necessary to negotiate the

peace, and his claim that Arviragus makes peace out of affection for his wife (*RB* 5135–42, 5151–52). Without persuasive powers grounded in a high social status and a strong emotional bond with her husband, Queen Genuis becomes a pale imitation of her Galfridian counterpart.

Female King-Candidates Dismissed

Although Laȝamon mentions the potential reign of the first of Geoffrey of Monmouth's female king-candidates, Helena, he presents that possibility as an unfortunate outcome that is unlikely to occur. In his story of Elene, Laȝamon omits the idea that the purpose of her excellent education is to prepare her for kingship, focusing instead on her role as queen consort and her father's role as ruler. Unlike Wace who, following Geoffrey, links the maiden's excellent education with her father's goal of preparing her to govern the kingdom of Britain effectively, Laȝamon separates the issue of this female figure's education from that of her potential reign (*HRB* 78.138–42; *RB* 5605–14). In addition, Laȝamon's phrasing moves other aspects of her 'biography' into the narrative foreground: King Coel's affection for his daughter gains prominence because it appears first, and Elene's future role as queen of Jerusalem gains prominence because it appears last. Bracketed by these details that Laȝamon inserts into Elene's story, the concept of her potential reign occupies the middle of the description and appears within the negative context of her father's lack of other heirs: "Ðes king hæfuede enne dohter þe wes him swiðe deore; / and he al þis kinelond bitahte þan maidene an hond, / for næfde he nan oðer child þe mihte i þissen londe beon king. / Ðat mæide hehte Elene; se oððen heo wes quene / i þan londe of Ierusalem, leoden to blissen [This king had a daughter who was very dear to him, and he put his entire kingdom into the hand of the young woman/girl, for he had no other child who could be king in this land. The young woman/girl was named Elene; later she was queen in the land of Jerusalem, to the joy of the people]" (*LB* 5443–47). This description of Elene's life not only asserts that the daughter inherits the throne because her father has no other option but also refers to her as a *mæide*, a 'young woman' or 'young girl'; this word choice makes the possibility of her reigning seem remote, given the masculinist world of the *Brut*.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Laȝamon's separate statement about Elene's education appears after readers have already begun to think of her as the queen consort of Jerusalem. This is a role that has positive connotations in the *Brut* because of the 'joy' Elene will bring to her people: "Ðis maiden wes wel itæht; on bocken heo cuðe godne cræft, / and wunede in þisse londe mid hire fader stronge [This young woman was well educated.

From books she learned beneficial knowledge, and she lived in this land with her mighty father]" (LB 5448–49). Most striking, however, is the fact that this statement not only denies to King Coel the intention of preparing his daughter to reign but also presents him as the sole possessor of the political power. In Laȝamon's retelling, no transfer of power from father to daughter is possible.

Having already defined her as a future queen consort, Laȝamon then adds speeches and narrative details that focus this plot sequence on the transfer of power from father to son-in-law; consequently, Elene recedes into the narrative background while her husband, here called Custance, moves into the foreground. In the *Brut*, Coel offers his submission to Custance and then Custance praises the king's wisdom and accepts the offer (LB 5469–80, 5482–86). By using these speeches to elaborate upon Wace's very brief statement, "Le regne li ad otreied / Si unt entr'els pris amistied [He granted him the kingdom and they became friends]," Laȝamon assigns more significance to the agreement than his predecessor does (RB 5647–48). Moreover, by adding the detail that Coel and Custance's reconciliation takes place with great ceremony and presenting Elene's marriage as the means through which Coel can "dihten [make arrangements]" for his daughter, Laȝamon keeps the narrative focus on Elene's father and husband-to-be (LB 5487, 5497). The poet then presents her marriage as the means of putting her husband in charge of the kingdom: with the support of his counselors, King Coel gives "Ælene Custance to are quene / and al his kineliche lond sette in Custances hond [Elene to Custance as queen and put(s) his entire kingdom in Custance's hands]" (LB 5499–500). After Custance's takeover from Coel, Laȝamon's Elene fades from view as the poet develops a portrait of her husband. One reason for this shift in focus is that Laȝamon omits Wace's assertion that the son learned the most from his mother, a change that further reduces the significance of Elene's education (RB 5671–72). Another reason is that Laȝamon inserts details concerning Custance that glorify him: he possesses a lofty status both because "God sulf hit hauede icoren [God himself had chosen it]" and because "weorld-seli men [world-fortunate men]" have honored him with his father's name (LB 5506, 5508).

Elene recedes even further into the narrative background because her son receives more development here than he does in the *roman de Brut*. Instead of preserving Wace's description of Eleine's son Constantin as loving the Britons because of his mother and the Romans because of his father, Laȝamon offers a portrait of male kingship: he presents an account of the people's submission to Elene's son (RB 5687–91). Although the *Brut*'s Costantin still feels affection for his people, he does so in exchange

for their obedience, and he inspires instant submission: “Al þat þet child mid æȝen isæh, al hit to bæh [All those that the child looked upon with his eyes, all submitted to him]” (LB 5515, 5518). Moreover, whereas Wace’s king possesses great valor, Laȝamon’s possesses great sternness: “Þene Costantin wes wrað, ne dursten na mon speken him wið [When Costantin was displeased, no one dared to speak with him]” (RB 5678–79; LB 5521). By the time Laȝamon has finished developing the son’s character, the son has displaced his mother as the noteworthy king-candidate. Finally, when Elene reenters the story as the queen of Jerusalem and recoverer of the True Cross, she remains a background figure both because Costantin entrusts the government of Rome to Elene’s three uncles, and because her role in the recovery of the True Cross is a passive one: she offers the Jews money if they will help her find it, and then she receives the cross after “þeo Iudeus heo sohten and þere quene heo itæhten [the Jews searched for it and delivered it to the queen]” (LB 5561–64, 5567–71). By making this female figure’s contribution to Christian history the most important aspect of her ‘biography,’ Laȝamon displaces Geoffrey of Monmouth’s theme of female kingship with that of queenly service to God.

Laȝamon’s treatment of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s second female king-candidate, Octavius’s daughter, makes her another conduit for the transfer of power from father to son-in-law. Wace begins his account of this young woman’s situation by honoring his Galfridian source, stating that the dying king wishes there to be peace after his death, but “une fille aveit si vulsist / Que le regne emprés lui tenist [he had a daughter and wanted her to reign after him]” (RB 5807–08). In contrast to Wace, however, Laȝamon omits any mention of the daughter’s potential reign: “Þe king hine biðohte what he don mihte, / wham he mihte bitæchen al his kineriche / and al his duȝeðe æfter his dæie [The king pondered what he could do, to whom he could entrust his entire kingdom and all his retainers after his reign]” (LB 5682–84). The phrasing here—particularly the word *bitæchen* ‘to entrust’—prepares for the English poet’s subsequent use of that word.⁵⁰ Furthermore, although the *Brut* account preserves the plot element of King Octaves’s seeking counsel, it emphasizes the need for the king (here called Octaves) to bestow his kingdom on a son-in-law. It also adds mention of the king’s lack of a son while omitting Wace’s comment that, by marrying Maximien, the young woman would become queen and thereby gain sovereignty over all of Britain (RB 5831–34; LB 5690–91).

Even the *Brut*’s preserving a trace of the concept of female kingship in the father’s desire that his daughter reign does not alter the fact that the poem finally dismisses that concept. Laȝamon’s phrasing elides

the potential reign of Octaues's daughter by creating a single complex sentence, the first part of which defines her as the conduit for the transfer of her father's power to a son-in-law: "Ðe king heom hauede isæid and bæd heom ræden him ræd / whæm he mihte bitæche al his kineriche / for nefde he nenne sune þe his land mihte halden, / ne child bute ane dohter þe him wes swiðe deore, / and hire he wolde bitachen al his kineriche / and ʒefuen hire lauereð þene hæhste mon of þis ærd [The king had spoken to them and bade them to give him advice as to whom he could entrust his entire kingdom, for he had no son who might take possession of his land, no child apart from one daughter who was very dear to him, and to her he wished to entrust his entire kingdom, give to her as husband the most powerful man in this land]" (LB 5688–93). When Laʒamon concludes this sentence by referring to how King Octaues can transfer all his goods to his nephew Conan, making the comment "Him heo he mihte bitæche [He could entrust her to him]," the poet ensures that the father's desire for his daughter to rule poses no threat to the smooth transfer of power from one male to another (LB 5695). The English poet also underscores how this transfer will occur by presenting it twice: the first time, as Octaues prepares to send a messenger to seek Maximien of Rome, the king pledges to "bitæchen [entrust]" his "kineriche [kingdom]" to Maximien and to give him his "dohter Orien to habben to quene [daughter Oriene to have as his queen]"; the second time, this messenger reiterates to the Roman leader the fact that the marriage will give Maximien possession of Octaues's daughter, kingdom, and all his subjects (LB 5738–39, 5762–63). Through Laʒamon's translation process, therefore, Octaues's daughter gains a name but becomes merely the means of transferring assets from her father to her husband. Given that the story ends with the words, "And þe king him forʒef his dohter to quene [And the king gave his daughter to him as queen]," this daughter could never be a king (LB 5807).

Female Kingship Denied

As Laʒamon develops the story of Wace's Guendoliene, he preserves her status as her husband's moral superior but adds details that develop a portrait of Locrin as a sinful king and his mistress as a usurper of the position of queen consort. The English poet's tendency to create stark contrasts between good and evil characters is evident when he presents his version of the queen, whom he calls Guendoleine, and her husband King Locrin. According to the *Brut*, Locrin is a wicked and deceptive liar the circumstances of whose death demonstrate that it is an act of

divine justice, but Guendoleine is a trusting wife who endures sorrow and suffering before she governs Britain effectively. Laȝamon retains and develops Wace's account of King Locrin's great love for the German princess Hestrild, Æstrild in the *Brut*, even adding a speech in which Locrin declares that he will honor this woman because of her amazing beauty and tells her that "for þe ic am swa bliðe swa næs I næuer ær on liue [because of you I am happier than I ever was in my life]" (LB 1122). Nevertheless, this love does not change the fact that the king acts ignobly and sinfully. Laȝamon underscores Locrin's moral faults by adding details to Corineüs's critique of his son-in-law to be. In the *Brut*, Locrin deserves "scondliche deaðe [ignominious death]" because he has "iscend [dishonored]" both Corineus and his daughter by pursuing an illicit relationship with Æstrild, has proved himself unworthy to be Brutus's son through his shameful behavior, and has abandoned Corineus's "feier and sceone . . . dohter Guendoleine [fair and beautiful . . . daughter Guendoleine]" (LB 1137–50). Locrin's behavior enables Æstrild to usurp the rightful queen consort's position.

Laȝamon also emphasizes Locrin's deception. Whereas Wace credits King Locrin with keeping his promise to marry Corineüs's daughter despite the fact that he takes the German princess as his lover, Laȝamon brands the king a liar and deceiver: "He nom Guendoleine and hefde heo to wiue; / and he hit seide, soð þeih hit nere, / þat he wolde Æstrilde senden vt of londe. / Ah ne dude he nawiht swo, for swiken he þohte [He took Guendoleine and had her as his wife, and he declared (though it was not true) that he would send Æstrild out of the country. However, he did nothing like that, for he planned to behave deceitfully]" (RB 1377–84; LB 1172–75). Laȝamon stresses the king's deception even more strongly by expanding Wace's three-line description of how Locrin keeps his mistress in an underground cavern into a catalogue of the cavern's luxurious, even hedonistic, accoutrements—ivory doors, expensive wall-hangings, and wine among them—and inserting his own critique into Wace's description of Locrin's pretended sacrifices to the gods that enable him to carry on his affair (RB 1385–88; LB 1181–86).⁵¹ Laȝamon asserts first that "Guendoleine him ilefede —luðere weren his craftes [Guendoleine believed him—his contrivances were sinful]" and then that "þus ferde Locrin þe wilde þat Astrild wes mid childe / and Guendoleine als wa, mid childe heo weren ba twa [in such a way, Locrin the perverse continued, with the result that Æstrild was with child and Guendoleine also: they were both with child]" (LB 1198–200).

Within the context of Locrin's decision—as soon as he learns that his father-in-law is safely dead—to set Guendoleine aside and make Æstrild his queen, Guendoleine's military action becomes entirely

appropriate revenge as well as an assertion of the rights that her husband has attempted to deny her (*LB* 1215–18, 1229–30). When Locrin learns “þat Guendoleine mid ferde fusde to þisse londe / to wreken hire teona of þon kinge and of þer quene [that Guendoleine was advancing with her army upon this land to avenge the wrongs done to her by the king and the queen],” readers know that Queen Guendoleine—not the new queen—is on the side of right (*LB* 1233–34). Nevertheless, Laʒamon further underscores the justice of the rightful queen’s cause by presenting Queen Æstrild as a second violator of Guendoleine’s rights. Æstrild, like Locrin, has committed wrongs against Guendoleine as the legitimate queen consort (*LB* 1234). Finally, the poet adds the detail that the arrow that kills Locrin pierces his heart (*LB* 1239). By doing so, Laʒamon provides a manner of death that punishes both the king’s deception and the origin of that deception: his inappropriate love for a foreign woman.

Crucially, when Laʒamon retells what Geoffrey of Monmouth presents as the story of Guendoleine’s reign as a female king, he sharpens the contrast between this woman and her dishonest male predecessor by elaborating upon her successes as a governor; nevertheless, he denies her the status of king. The basis of Laʒamon’s portrait of outstanding female leadership is his rephrasing of Wace’s statement that, after Locrin’s death, the queen “la terre prist tute e saisi [took and seized the whole country]” so that her takeover seems natural: “Guendoleine hæfde þa vfer hond and iahned hire al þis lond [Guendoleine had the upper hand and took possession of this entire land as her own]” (*RB* 1430; *LB* 1242). Even her one questionable trait in Geoffrey’s history, her temper, takes on positive connotations when Laʒamon characterizes it as “haiʒere witte [sterner soundness of judgment]” (*LB* 1248). Because her cause is just, Guendoleine’s execution of Locrin’s foreign queen and illegitimate daughter does not receive Laʒamon’s condemnation. In fact, his lack of comment signals the appropriateness of all three deaths that result from Guendoleine’s actions: “þa hefde heo isclawen þene king and þa neowe quene and heora child [And then she had eliminated the king, and the new queen, and her child]” (*LB* 1253).

Having established the justice of Locrin’s loss of power and life, Laʒamon develops Wace’s brief description of Guendoleine as “mult fere / E merveilluse justisiere [very proud, and a great dispenser of justice]” into a portrait of effective leadership (*RB* 1441–42). Laʒamon’s Guendoleine replaces the injustice she herself has suffered with the justice she brings to all:

Guendoleine wes swiðe strong for al Brutenne wes on hire hond;
 and heo was swa swiðe wel biþouht þat ælche monne heo dude riht.
 Ælch mon mihte faren 3end hire lond þai he bere ræd gold.
 Ten 3er heo wes mid Locrine; ofte heo hæfde seorwe and pine.
 Fiftene 3er and niȝen dawæs seoððen Locrin wes dead
 al Brutaine heo wuste wel mid þon beste,
 inne griðe and in friðe —wun wes on folke. (*LB* 1255–61)

[Guendoleine was very mighty, for all Britain was in her hand; and she was so very well disposed that to each and every person she administered justice. Any man could travel through her land, even if he carried red gold. Ten years she was with Locrin: often she had sorrow and affliction. For fifteen years and nine days after Locrin was dead, she ruled all Britain as well as the best, in peace and prosperity—there was joy in her subjects.]

By contrasting her suffering as the wife of a dishonest husband with her subjects' enjoyment of justice and peace, Laȝamon presents Guendoleine as an ideal or even "iconic" ruler.⁵² He even suggests that her exercise of good governance continues after her return home to Cornwall to take possession of her father's land, stating that Guendoleine's homecoming brings joy to the Cornish: "Þa leoden weoren þe bliðre [The people were the happier]" (*RB* 1449–50; *LB* 1264).

Despite her excellence as a leader, however, Laȝamon's Guendoleine is clearly a regent and not a female king. Through his presentation of Locrin's heirs as well as his manner of labeling both Cornwall's land and inhabitants and Britain's territory, Laȝamon delimits Guendoleine's power. His contrasting Locrin's children based on their gender is consistent with his careful containment of this woman's sovereignty: "Nes feirure child nan [There was no more beautiful child]" than Abren, but "Guendoleine hefde enne sune —an heorte hire wes þa bet!— / Madan he was ihaten, heh sune þes kinges [Guendoleine had a son—in her heart was greater joy!—he was named Madan, the highborn son of the king]" (*LB* 1203–5). In the *Brut*, a son has much greater value than even the most beautiful of daughters, and sovereignty is inherently male. When the poet describes Cornwall, he calls it "hire fader londe [her father's land]" and its inhabitants "monnen / þe hire fader wolde þe while he wes on liue [the people over whom her father had ruled while he was alive]" (*LB* 1217–21). This terminology bases Cornish identity on a dead male rather than on that man's living daughter. Moreover, the poet defines Britain as the territory over which Guendoleine never has control in her own right. Although the poet refers to her as "leodene læfdi [sovereign lady]" (*LB* 1247)—a term that distinguishes Guendoleine as a governor from a regular queen consort (Old English *cwen*), Laȝamon ensures that his readers understand

that this woman is a mere regent by stating, “Seoððen heo 3ef Madan an hond al his fader kinelond [Then she put into Madan’s hand all of his father’s kingdom]” (LB 1262). This phrasing defines Britain as a realm that remains the property of males: first Locrin, and then Madan.

When Laȝamon translates the story of Geoffrey’s Marcia, he limits the scope of her learning; consequently, he lessens her historical significance. Given the English poet’s broadening Wace’s description of Marcie as “de buen pris e de bone fame [much esteemed and renowned]” (RB 3338) into the assertion that she remains, and will always remain, “widene cuð [widely known / renowned]” as well as his enhancing Marcie’s status by adding the detail that she required the whole land to conform to her law code, readers might expect him to outdo Wace in praising Marcie (LB 3137–38, 3143). However, the details of Laȝamon’s story make his Marcie less accomplished than her counterparts in *The History of the Kings of Britain* and the *roman de Brut*. Unlike Geoffrey’s Marcia who is learned in all arts, or Wace’s Marcie who has devoted herself to learning to write as well as to read, this Marcie has only “anne craft: heo wes a boken wel itaht [one particular skill: she was well-educated from books]” (HRB 47.258; RB 3339–40; LB 3139). In addition to her learning being limited to the skill of reading rather than encompassing either the skill of writing or the mastery of the liberal arts, it is limited to “wordliche dome [worldly wisdom]” (LB 3142). Perhaps Laȝamon imposes this second limitation because he is uncomfortable with the idea of a woman possessing knowledge of spiritual matters. If *wordliche* is translated as ‘word-ly’ or ‘bookish,’ then Marcie lacks knowledge based on experience. Whatever Laȝamon’s reason for imposing this limitation, however, this Marcie lacks the intellectual attainments of her counterparts in *The History of the Kings of Britain* and the *roman de Brut* and therefore cannot match their historical significance.

Marcie’s historical significance in the *Brut* decreases further because the scope of her intellectual contributions likewise remains limited, and those contributions set her apart from other women. The reason for this situation is that Laȝamon defines Marcie as the creator of the Marcian law code so strenuously that the “multa et inaudita quae proprio ingenio reppererat [many and incredible things that she invented through her own natural genius]” in Geoffrey’s history become vaguely defined reminders of her achievements (HRB 47.258–59; LB 3138). In the *Brut*, the English poet’s assertions that the laws were named “æfter þare lafuedi...wihuten wene [after the lady...undoubtedly]” and that the “seoð [truth]” is that King Alfred “ne makede heo noht ærst [was not the first to make them],” for “heo makede þa quene [the queen created them]” displace what—for Geoffrey of Monmouth—is this woman’s most important role: ruling Britain well (HRB 47.264–66; LB 3145–46, 3151–53). Moreover, although Laȝamon

presents this evidence of a “female influence” on Anglo-Saxon culture more assertively than Wace does, his strong emphasis on the queen’s act of creating the law code as well as on her (apparently rare) willingness to learn puts her in the extraordinary woman category (*LB* 3140–53).⁵³ Laȝamon’s comment, “Heo leornede hire lære leofliche on heorten [She had gained her learning with a willing heart],” encourages readers to assume that learning and the will to acquire it are rarities in a woman (*LB* 3140). It therefore undermines Geoffrey’s flexible model of gender roles by redefining Marcia as an exception to the rule of feminine inferiority.

By developing both Marcie’s husband and son as characters and emulating Wace’s presentation of her as a regent, Laȝamon causes this female figure to recede into the narrative background. In sharp contrast to Wace who credits Marcie’s husband with one vaguely expressed accomplishment after he inherits the throne (“Guincelins fu bone vie [Guincelins led a good life]” (*RB* 3335)), Laȝamon fleshes out this male character and gives him a more prominent position in the story. According to the *Brut*, Guencelin was a “aht mon [brave man]” who “walde þis lond and þas duȝeðe æfter his fader dæie [ruled this land and the people of the kingdom after his father’s reign]” and “wes þurðut alle þing clæne mon and god king; / he ledde swiðe feir lif and he hæfde a god wif [was thoroughly in all things a pure man and a good king. He led a very proper life, and he had an excellent wife]” (*LB* 3133–36). This strong praise of her husband makes the limited scope of Marcie’s accomplishments less impressive by comparison, while the phrase “he had an excellent wife” defines the wife’s deeds as enhancements to the already excellent reputation of her husband. Furthermore, when restating Wace’s comment that the queen had only one child by her husband (*RB* 3349–52), Laȝamon adds not only that the queen was “wa [sad]” but also that she has had “ænne lutelne sune [one little son]” “bi hire weoreld-kinge [by her earthly king]” (*LB* 3154–56); these details position Marcie as a queen consort whose function is to serve her husband, primarily by producing children—preferably male ones. The poet’s emphasis on the queen consort role is consistent with his erasure of her kingship.

Laȝamon’s word choice denies Marcie the status of king, for it leaves no doubt that her governance of Britain is merely a bridge between reigns by males; it is not an alternative to male kingship. As regent, she “nom þas riche and mid ræde heo walde [took possession of the sovereignty and ruled with counsel]” on behalf of her son, and “wiste wel hire sone a mid hireseolue [knew well how (to instruct) her son, always with her]” (*LB* 3159–60). For Laȝamon, kingship is an inherently male function: he notes that Marcie’s son takes over “þa þe sune wes swa ald þat he wes an horse bald [when the son was old enough that he was courageous

on horseback],” and he states how pleased the people are when Marcie gives her son the crown—even labeling the people as “his folke,” Sillius’s people (*LB* 3161–62). Finally, Laȝamon’s characterization of King Sillius as genuinely good and his early death as a tragedy further reduces Queen Marcie’s historical significance: “He wes a wel god mon and softe he wolde libben; / ne leouede he noht half his lif þat him ne com his dæd-sih [He was a very virtuous man, and he wished to live at a gentle pace. He had not lived half his lifetime when his death-moment came]” (*LB* 3163–64). In short, Laȝamon disempowers Marcie by limiting the scope of her learning, contributions to society, and role in governing as well as by developing the male figures in her story. The result of his translation process is the erasure of the model of female kingship that Marcia embodies in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history.

The beginning of Laȝamon’s account of King Leir and his three daughters provides a hint that this translator will deny the status of female king to his Cordeilla figure, and it raises questions about how good Leir’s youngest daughter really is. The English poet’s opening lines express more explicitly than Wace’s the fact that Leir could not have any more children after begetting three daughters: “*Nefde he nenne sune —þerfore he warð sari— / his manscipe to halden buten þa þreo dohtren* [He *did not have* a son *at all*—therefore he was grieved—to preserve his honor; instead, he had three daughters]” (*RB* 1669–70; *LB* 1462–63, my emphasis). Both the emphatic double negative that underscores the absence of a male heir and the articulation of the idea that only a son can maintain a father’s honor cause Laȝamon’s version of this story to undermine Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Cordeilla from the start. Laȝamon continues to diverge from Geoffrey’s account when he refuses to allow his Cordoille to fit the category of ‘good daughter’ comfortably, despite her speaking the truth. When Cordoille enters Laȝamon’s account of King Leir’s reign, she is aware that her sisters have lied and has “*nom hire leaffulne huie þat heo liȝen nolden* [made a faithful vow to herself that she would not lie]”; therefore, she speaks without regard for what her father wishes to hear (*LB* 1515–27). However, her speaking the truth overwhelms and dishonors her father. When she declares that she loves him with the “*sohfaste loue* [genuine love]” of a daughter, but men will respect him to the same extent as he has possessions, Leir reacts with rage (*LB* 1523–27). In fact, his rage is so intense that his face turns black, and he falls “*iswowen* [having fainted]” (*LB* 1533–36).

The king’s loss of consciousness demonstrates how deeply his youngest daughter’s words have hurt and outraged him, but Leir then forces readers to doubt the appropriateness of those words by making a strong

accusation: “Nauere ich ne wende þat þu me woldes þus scanden [Never did I believe that you would so disgrace/harm me]” (LB 1543). Given that the Middle English word *scanden* denotes ‘to disgrace,’ ‘to harm,’ and even ‘to destroy, kill’ somebody, this accusation signals that Cordoille has acted wrongly.⁵⁴ By emphasizing the seriousness of his daughter’s offense, Leir again invites readers to question her behavior: “Ðarfore þu scalt beon dæd ich wene —fliȝ ut of min eāh-sene! [For that you shall be dead, in my mind—run away, out of my sight!]” (LB 1544). When the king expresses this sentiment a second time (in a letter to King Aganippus that circulates widely), he reinforces the readers’ impression that Cordoille has acted wrongly in disrespecting her father (LB 1583–85). Cordoille’s own behavior likewise reinforces this impression. Her feeling “swðen swomefest for hire fader heo scunede [extremely ashamed because she had rejected her father]” causes Cordoille to take what Laȝamon as narrator calls “þene beste red [the best course of action]”: she stays in her chamber and grieves deeply, apparently regretting her aggressive words to her father (LB 1554–56). Although she later responds compassionately to the arrival in France of her father, physically weak and with only one servant to accompany him, the *Brut* complicates the character of Leir’s youngest daughter (LB 1761–96).

Having already caused readers to doubt Cordoille’s goodness, Laȝamon delegitimizes her reign. According to the *Brut*’s version of events, her nephews seize all of the kingdom of Britain from Cordoille because she has no right to rule: “For hit was swuþe mouchel scome and ec swiþe muchel grame / þat scholde a quene beon king in þisse londe, / and heora sunen beon buten, þa weren hire beteren, / of þan aldre sustren, þa þa æðelen sulden habben [For it was a major disgrace and also a great harm that a woman/queen should be king in this land, and that their sons, who were her betters, should be deprived—sons of the elder sisters, those who ought to have supremacy]” (LB 1870–74). This statement is significant not only because it articulates misogynistic ideas—that it is wrong for a woman (or, more specifically, a queen consort) to become a king, that Cordoille’s nephews are her superiors due to their status as the sons of her elder sisters, and that males have a natural right to sovereignty—but also because it is narration rather than a character’s speech. Had Laȝamon assigned these lines to one of the nephews, readers could dismiss them as the manipulative language of a traitor, but he has not. Instead, by giving these lines the authority of the narrator’s voice, which in the *Brut* is generally indistinguishable from the poet’s voice, Laȝamon encourages his readers to accept them as the only way to interpret the situation. Given that this poet intrudes into his narrative only

occasionally and at pivotal moments, this passage provides what appears to be a rare expression of his personal attitudes.

The contrast Lažamon creates between Cordoille and both her powerful husband and her reenergized father prepares for her final dismissal. As in Wace's version of the story, King Aganippus desires Leir's youngest daughter for her noble qualities and only desires her more when he suspects that Leir wishes to keep this woman from him (*RB* 1798–804; *LB* 1563–70, 1596–99). This situation makes Cordoille a means of proving that Aganippus can get what he wants. When Leir seeks his child's aid after he has been stripped of all but a single retainer, Cordoille remains the compassionate daughter who ensures that her father enters her husband's presence only after her father has recovered both his health and the dignity a royal retinue confers (*RB* 1987–2002; *LB* 1765–96). Nevertheless, when King Aganippus receives Leir, Lažamon's description of the event keeps Cordoille in the narrative background: "Aganippus wes bliþe þæt Leir wes cumen liðen, / ferde him toʒenes mid alle his þeines / and þa quene Cordoille —þa hauede Leir is wille! [Aganippus was pleased that Leir had arrived by ship; in response, he went to him with all his warriors and with the queen Cordoille—then Leir had what he desired!]" (*LB* 1810–12). In Lažamon's translation of this story, Aganippus remains the dominant figure when he commands all his people to obey Leir until the king of Britain departs for his own land. The French king becomes even more dominant, however, when Lažamon adds that any man who refuses to join Aganippus in treating Leir as his sovereign will find that "on ueste it bið iwreken [in a fist it will be avenged]" (*LB* 1828).

Aganippus continues to occupy the narrative foreground both when Leir asks for his leave to return to Britain and when the French king gives his father-in-law advice, advice so specific that it sounds like instructions. Leir will receive from Aganippus both five hundred ships and all necessary troops and supplies, travel with his daughter who will bring with her a large military force, and reconquer Britain in order that Cordoille may possess it after her father's death (*LB* 1834–48). Furthermore, by giving these instructions, Aganippus positions himself as the future ruler of Britain: he emphasizes that Cordoille—who will bring troops with her—is "þisse londes quene [queen of this land]" (*LB* 1841), thus establishing a link between the kingdoms of France and Britain. A few lines later, Lažamon underscores the French king's influence over Leir by saying that "Leir king dude þus, / and al he iworhte swa his freond him tahte [King Leir acted in this way, and he took all actions as his kinsman by marriage had counseled him]"

(LB 1849–50). The strength of this influence increases the likelihood that Aganippus plans, after Leir dies, to reign jointly with his wife over Britain. Because Leir subsequently leaves his reconquered kingdom to Cordoille “þe wes Francene quene [who was the queen of France],” the possibility of joint rule remains open (LB 1855).

Laʒamon then conflates Cordoille’s roles as Aganippus’s queen consort and Leir’s heir by having Aganippus die during Cordoille’s five-year reign. Consequently, it becomes possible that she governs Britain first with her husband and then on his behalf: “Fulle fif ʒere quene heo wes here, / þa while Francene king fæi-siðe makede [She was queen here for the span of five years, during which time the French king made his death-journey]” (LB 1862–63). Two additional details make it likely that Cordoille does not rule Britain alone. One is that King Leir himself displays the power his daughter lacks. Laʒamon’s Cordoille takes no military action during Leir’s campaign to regain his kingdom; instead, her father negotiates terms with or strikes down his enemies, and then takes the whole kingdom into his possession (LB 1851–54). The other detail is that, as in Wace’s account, Cordoille’s nephews seize power as soon as they hear her husband is dead, for she is presumably able to protect the land she has ruled “mid hæʒere strenðe [with great (military) strength]” only while her husband lives (RB 2051–56; LB 1861).

Finally, Laʒamon encourages readers to dismiss Cordoille by presenting her as a nondescript leader as well as a pathetic and foolish suicide victim. Because of the way in which the description of her nephews’ rebellion begins, Cordoille appears unable to defend her sovereignty: “Heo bigunnen were —wanne com on west [They began a war—destruction came as a result]” (LB 1875). Even when Laʒamon’s narration states that Morgan and Cunedagies lose battles as well as win them, Cordoille receives credit neither for leading troops nor for any victories over her nephews (LB 1879); consequently, she becomes a nonentity as a leader. In addition, the English poet’s translation changes the circumstances of her suicide in ways that degrade her further. She proves herself to be a helpless female when she gets captured, put in “ane quale-huse [a prison for those condemned to death],” and driven to commit suicide (LB 1881–82). More importantly, however, the *Brut*’s account of the suicide portrays Cordoille as not only psychologically weak but also blameworthy. When Laʒamon explains that the nephews “werðede heore mod-dri mare þene heo sulden / þat þe wimman was swa wroð þat hire sculuen heo was lað [provoked their aunt more than they should have, so that the woman was so perturbed that she became hateful to herself]” (LB 1883–84), Cordoille appears incapable of coping either with prison

or with whatever cruel treatment her nephews inflict on her, and her suicide out of self-hate raises additional questions for readers about how good a ruler she is.

When Cordoille stabs herself to death, Laʒamon as narrator offers her no sympathy. Instead, he condemns her: “Þat wes an uuel ræd þat hire suluen makede dead! [That was an evil course of action that she should make herself dead!]” (LB 1886). Even Laʒamon’s final comment about the usurpation of Cordoille’s throne appears to validate the manliness of the act: “Þeo wes al þis kinelond an Morgan and Cunedagies heond; / heo fengen to þissen lond and mid fuhten hit biwunnen [Then this entire kingdom was in the hands of Morgan and Cunedagies. They seized this land and acquired it through war]” (LB 1887–88). According to Laʒamon, male rule after usurpation is not ideal but is still more effective than, and preferable to, female rule. His translation of the *roman de Brut* keeps female figures with the potential to wield political power strictly within the bounds of traditional gender roles; as a result, female kingship is not possible in the *Brut*. The erasure of female kingship that Laʒamon achieves, however, is just the most prominent aspect of his translation of both male and female characters so that they conform to his socially conservative values.

The daughter of the king of Norway, who in the *Brut* acquires the name of Delgan but does not fit neatly into a particular category in Fries’s schema for Arthurian females, provides a useful endpoint to the consideration of Laʒamon’s female figures because her story typifies his tendencies as a translator: to present female characters as objects of exchange and victims of circumstance, to develop even minor male characters so much that they overshadow their female counterparts, and to treat most of these females as lacking moral integrity. Although Delgan’s role is essentially the same as that of her French counterpart, she can receive more development because she still asks her lover the king of Denmark to rescue her from her marriage to Brennes. Nevertheless, Laʒamon follows his usual practice of giving the female character’s role dramatic intensity by reducing her to an object of exchange and focusing on her victimization. Despite becoming “swuþe dure [very dear]” to her father in the *Brut* (LB 2184), Delgan enters Laʒamon’s poem as her counterparts enter the works of Geoffrey and Wace: she is the means for Brennes to forge an alliance with the king of Norway and thereby gain the resources to attack Belin. In addition, as in Wace’s account, the king’s daughter is given to Brennes along with goods (RB 2411–12; LB 2209–10).

However, when Laʒamon describes the circumstances of the marriage, he reduces Delgan to an object of exchange. First, by expanding Wace’s mention that her husband acquires “grant aveir [much wealth]”

into a list of goods consisting of “gold and gærsume, feoh and færde [gold and treasure, movables and military forces],” the poet emphasizes the commercial motivation for this marriage (*RB* 2412; *LB* 2210). Next he presents Brennes as caring much more about goods than his wife. Receiving the above-listed riches makes Brennes feel “on heorte . . . bliðe [joyful . . . in his heart],” while gaining a wife causes him to feel nothing in particular: “Ðat mæiden he weddede and nom heo to his bedde [He married the girl and took her to his bed]” (*LB* 2211–12). Laʒamon subsequently emphasizes that Brennes’s primary interest is in attacking his brother, not loving his wife, by adding that “seoueniht he wes þære —hit þutte him seoue ʒere / ær he aʒen come to fæhten wih his broðer [he was there for seven nights, but to him it seemed seven years before he could return to engage in armed conflict with his brother]” (*LB* 2213–14). After Brennes has lost Delgan, the narratorial statement that Brennes “leouede [loved]” her does not change the fact that his primary concern is with his own power and reputation: he feels “grome [rage]” and “scome [disgrace]” at having lost both his kingdom and his queen (*LB* 2420–21).

The English poet then focuses on Delgan’s victimization by increasing the dramatic tension within this story in two ways. He makes her love for the king of Denmark stronger than it is in the *roman de Brut* so that she has loved him “swuþe [greatly]” and the king becomes “leof hire weis on mode [dear to her heart],” and he has Delgan realize that she must soon leave her homeland with her new husband—thus putting her under time pressure (*LB* 2238–40). Delgan’s contacting her lover gains dramatic intensity because Laʒamon gives her an additional motive both for loving and for sending word to Godlac: he is “swiðe god cniht [a very good warrior]” who is worthy of her love (*LB* 2241). Her primary motive for writing to Godlac, desire to escape from a forced marriage, likewise gains intensity when the poet describes Delgan as sending to her “deore [beloved]” “stille boc-runen [secret runic letters]” in which she tells him both that he has only three days to rescue her and that Brennes “hauede heo biwedded and ihaued heo to bedde / al hire vnðonkes —þerfore hire wes uneðe [ha(s) married her and taken her to his bed against her will, for which reason she (is) troubled]” (*LB* 2243–49). Through these details, Laʒamon makes Delgan a victim of *raptus* in both of its senses: kidnapping and nonconsensual intercourse.

Laʒamon underscores the dramatic intensity of Delgan’s plea for rescue by providing an excerpt from one of her letters: “Sone hit mæi ilimpen þanne ihc hunnen liðe— / þah þu habben blisse and grið— ne speke ich þe naueremore wið. / And ihc sende þe gretinge of mine gold ringe [Soon it might happen that I must sail away from here—yet

may you have joy and peace—and I shall never again speak to you. And I send this greeting to you through my gold ring]" (LB 2250–52). Delgan's gift of a ring to Godlac validates him as her true love while providing evidence that she is committed to a man other than her husband. This love-token simultaneously positions her as a victim of circumstance and an adulteress, or, to borrow Fries's terminology, as both a heroine in desperate need of rescue and a female counter-hero.⁵⁵

Having positioned Delgan as a damsel in distress, Laȝamon lavishes so much attention on King Godlac that the lady fades into the narrative background. Godlac becomes the story's central figure because his actions receive eighty-five long lines of narration from Laȝamon, as opposed to sixty-six octosyllabic lines from Wace (RB 2451–516; LB 2253–338). Moreover, these long lines give Godlac the opportunity to tell his own story (LB 2306–12, 2317–38). Given that Delgan's actions receive only fourteen lines of coverage in the *Brut*, Godlac overshadows his beloved (LB 2238–52). Furthermore, because Laȝamon attributes to the king of Denmark feelings for Delgan that are so strong that he swoons when he hears of her marriage, Godlac supplants his lady as the story's emotional center (LB 2253–55). Laȝamon even adds a speech in which the Danish king calls upon his warriors to help him capture the ship carrying Delgan and promises them his lifelong affection, if the rescue mission succeeds (LB 2271–74). As a result, Godlac's enthusiasm for his role as hero and successful performing of it cause Delgan to fade into the narrative background.

Finally, Laȝamon raises doubts about Delgan's loyalty by ruining the romantic potential of this pair. Despite the passionate love Godlac feels for his lady and Brennes's agreeing to give Delgan to her beloved in exchange for the Danish king's fealty and payment of tribute to Britain, Delgan's story lacks a happy ending (LB 2383–92). Its closing lines not only deny readers the satisfaction of knowing that Godlac and Delgan achieve lasting happiness, but also cause them to question Delgan's credentials as a lady loyal in love: "And Godlac ledde forh þa wifmon swiðe fæire, / and he heo bohte swiðe deore, bruken he heo þohte [And Godlac led the very beautiful woman away, and he had bought her at a very high price, *thinking he would keep her*]" (LB 2395–96, my emphasis). If Godlac cannot turn his plan into reality, then Delgan is a stereotypically untrustworthy female. As a translator, Laȝamon is seldom willing to fully validate a female figure.

The presentation of female figures in Laȝamon's *Brut* demonstrates that this English poem continues the cultural work of Wace's *roman de Brut*: it categorizes questionable females as either truly wicked or truly good, dwells on violence against women in ways that disempower

Galfridian females, and reasserts a traditional model of heroism—a male one. By shifting heroic and potentially heroic females into traditional gender roles, Laȝamon strips the female kings and female king-candidates that Geoffrey of Monmouth created of most of their political power and historical significance. In Laȝamon's *Brut*, female powerlessness—rather than female power—becomes the message of early British history because the poet has dismantled Geoffrey of Monmouth's feminist historiography.

CONCLUSION

By focusing on moral issues rather than political ones, and by judging characters (especially female ones) rather than presenting them neutrally, all of the following redactors and translators depart from Galfridian historiography: the Variant-redactor, Wace, Henry of Huntingdon, Matthew Paris, and Laȝamon. Although Wace's misogyny is not as overt as that of the other redactors and translators whose works respond directly to the text Geoffrey of Monmouth called *De gestis Britonum*, it still allies him with these men who promoted ecclesiastical rather than secular historiography and positions him as one of Geoffrey's philosophical opponents. All five of these authors transform Geoffrey's female figures in ways that undo the cultural work that *Concerning the Deeds of the Britons* performs: to present female kingship as an attractive alternative to rule by males, an alternative that benefits early Britain; and to integrate female figures into an account of the past in which both they and their male counterparts can escape the restrictions of traditional gender roles.

Although previous scholarship has examined the differences between Wace's and Laȝamon's verse translations of an originally Galfridian narrative, its tendency to focus on the Arthurian sections of the three works has obscured a fundamental difference between the verse translations. While Wace's *roman de Brut* presents conflicting images of women, Laȝamon's *Brut* presents traditional images that reinforce negative stereotypes of women. As a result, in contrast to Wace who sometimes honors Geoffrey's positive presentation of female figures in general and female kings in particular, Laȝamon erases the concept of female rule from the narrative of the past he inherited from Geoffrey of Monmouth, associates womanhood with weakness, and both villainizes and dismisses problematic female figures. Analysis of the non-Arthurian portions of Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Wace's *roman de Brut*, and Laȝamon's *Brut* reveals that they embody three distinct ways of imagining gender roles although they present the same series of early British rulers.

Future study of these three works should continue to explore their differences so that both specialist and general readers can better understand each author's version of the early British past. Nevertheless, only careful attention to the female figures present in all the redactions and translations of Geoffrey's *Deeds of the Britons* discussed in this volume clarifies what makes Galfridian historiography unique: it introduces, and positions at pivotal moments in history, female figures that (in most cases) possess positive attributes and have a positive impact on events. Geoffrey of Monmouth's contribution to medieval historiography deserves greater attention from both scholarly and general readers precisely because medieval redactors and translators so quickly destroyed the many positive images of women he introduced to the tradition.

I do not label Geoffrey of Monmouth a feminist author for his time because I think that people today need Geoffrey to be a feminist, but rather because I think it essential that medieval texts that treat female figures in progressive and positive ways—especially ones created by male authors—receive recognition. Geoffrey's history engages readers, for it performs cultural work more complex than praise or blame. It therefore calls into question French literature specialist Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski's generalization that "praise and blame are the two currents that wend their way through writings about women from antiquity to modern times."¹ Through a narrative voice that does not indulge in the villainization of females but rather underscores the failures of males, Geoffrey's history presents the exercise of power by females as normative and of benefit to society. As a twelfth-century exception to the misogynist rule, the book commonly known as *The History of the Kings of Britain* corroborates Fries's conclusion that there is "a profound worsening of the image of women and an equally momentous narrowing of their acceptable gender roles" palpable in literary works of the later Middle Ages.²

Geoffrey of Monmouth's unique contribution to medieval historiography is especially noteworthy because his book performs cultural work quite different from that performed by the courtly poetry of twelfth-century France. As French literature specialist R. Howard Bloch has documented, this courtly poetry constructs an "abstraction of the feminine" that, although it "seems to elevate" woman, actually disempowers her by "keep[ing] her at a distance from history and the world."³ Geoffrey's history does not construct such an "abstraction of the feminine." On the contrary, it offers a broad range of female figures: some of them perform heroic acts within the constraints of traditional gender roles, while others not only perform traditionally male roles

such as king and hero but also receive the author's approval for doing so. Consequently, Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the British past invites twenty-first-century readers to reconsider their assumption that the word 'feminist' cannot serve medievalists who wish to describe those rare medieval texts that do not reflect the misogynist values so often expressed during the Middle Ages.

NOTES

Introduction Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship

1. For Henry of Huntingdon's account of how he discovered the existence of Geoffrey's history, see his *EWB* 1.558–59, a text which also appears in Robert of Torigni, *Chronica*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, 4 vols. (London: Longman & Company, 1884–89), 4:65–75. Editor and translator of the *Vita Merlini* Basil Clarke dates the poem to about 1150, introduction to Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini / Life of Merlin*, ed. with introduction, facing translation, textual commentary, name notes index and translations of the *Lailoken* tales by Basil Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. vii [vii–50].
2. Fiona Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, Studies in Arthurian and Courtly Cultures (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
3. J. S. P. Tatlock, "Geoffrey of Monmouth's Motives for Writing his *Historia*," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 79.4 (1938): 695 and 701 [695–703].
4. J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae and Its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), pp. 286–88.
5. Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 206 and 208.
6. Martin B. Shichtman and Laurie A. Finke, "Profiting from the Past: History as Symbolic Capital in the *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Arthurian Literature* 12 (1993): 22 [1–35], republished as Chapter 2 of *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), pp. 35–70.
7. Laura D. Barefield, "Gender and the Creation of Lineage in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 9 (2002): 1–3 [1–14].
8. Sir Thomas Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, rev. P. J. C. Field, 3rd edn., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). Galfridian females other than Ganhumara receive occasional attention. For

- Ganieda, see Lucy Allen Paton, "Merlin and Ganieda," *Modern Language Notes* 18.6 (1903): 163–69 and Inge Vielhauer-Pfeiffer, "Merlins Schwester: Betrachtungen zu einem keltischen Sagenmotiv," *Inklings: Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* 8 (1990): 161–79. For Estrildis, see J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Origin of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Estrildis," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 11 (1936): 121–24 and Katherine Olson, "Gwendolyn and Estrildis: Invading Queens in British Historiography," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 44.1 (2008): 36–52. For Igera, see Martine Thiry-Stassin, "Ygerne entre Geoffroy de Monmouth et Wace," in *Conjointure arthurienne*, ed. Juliette Dor (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: Institut d'Études Médiévales, Université Catholique de Louvain, 2000), pp. 109–21. For Morgan, see Maureen Fries, "From The Lady to The Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance," *Arthuriana* 4.1 (1994): 1–18. For examples of studies of female figures in *Le Morte Darthur*, see Virginia Moran, "Malory/Guenevere: Sexuality as Deconstruction," *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* 1.2 (1991): 70–76; Georgiana Donavin, "Elaine's Epistolarity: The Fair Maid of Astolat's Letter in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," *Arthuriana* 13.3 (2003): 68–82; and Donald L. Hoffman, "Perceval's Sister: Malory's 'Rejected' Masculinities," *Arthuriana* 6.4 (1996): 72–83. For studies of female figures in romances before Malory, see Anne Clark Bartlett, "Cracking the Penile Code: Reading Gender and Conquest in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," *Arthuriana* 8.2 (1998): 56–76 and Susann T. Samples, "'Problem Women' in Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*," *Arthuriana* 11.4 (2001): 23–38.
9. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* survives in British Library MS. Cotton Nero A.x. and *Beowulf* in British Library MS. Cotton Vitellius A.xv. The former is available in *The Complete Works of the Pearl-poet*, trans. with introduction by Casey Finch, ed. Malcolm Andrew, Ronald Waldron, and Clifford Peterson (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Oxford, England: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 209–321 and the latter in *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. with introduction, bibliography, notes, glossary, and appendices Fr. Klaeber, 3rd edn., with first and second supplements (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950). For descriptions of the more than 200 extant manuscripts of Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae*, see Julia C. Crick, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 3: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1989). Crick records the survival of fifty-eight twelfth-century manuscripts, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 4: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1991), p. 216. Francis Ingledew notes Geoffrey's pivotal position as a historian, "The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 69 (1994): 669–70 [665–704].
 10. Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 500.

11. R. William Leckie, Jr., *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 119; R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, introduction to *Gesta regum Anglorum*, by William of Malmesbury, vol. 2: *General Introduction and Commentary*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors and completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. xxxviii [xvii–xlvi] with pp. xxxvi–xlvi reprinting Revd. J. Sharpe, preface to *The History of the Kings of England and the Modern History of William of Malmesbury*, trans. Revd. J. Sharpe (London: Longman, 1815), pp. vii–xvii [vii–xx]. For an edition of Bede's history, see *HE*.
12. Ingledew, "The Book of Troy," 703.
13. Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100–1300* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 10; Laura Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers 1300–1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), pp. 88 and 130; George R. Keiser, "Edward III and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 48 (1973): 37 [37–51].
14. Siân Echard, "'Whyche Thyng Semeth Not to Agree with Other Histories...': Rome in Geoffrey of Monmouth and His Early Modern Readers," *Arthurian Literature* 26 (2009): 121 [109–29].
15. Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, "The Dark Dragon of the Normans: A Creation of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Stephen of Rouen, and Merlin Silvester," *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* 2.2 (1992): 2 [1–19]. Rupert Taylor credits Geoffrey of Monmouth with introducing political prophecy to England as well as with making the genre "accessible to England and the Continent," *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911; repr. New York: AMS Reprint, 1967), pp. 7–9 and 24, but Tatlock is more moderate in his claims, *The Legendary History*, pp. 403–21.
16. Julia Crick, "Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History," *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1992): 360 n13 [357–71]; Jean Blacker, introduction to *Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies of Merlin*, *Arthuriana* 15.1 (2005): 10 [1–26].
17. Blacker, introduction to *Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies*, 10.
18. Blacker explains that Wace could have omitted *The Prophecies* because he found them difficult to interpret, or thought his lay audience could not understand them, or hoped to avoid the potential awkwardness of reproducing prophecies that might have had the purpose of presenting "a more glorious future for a minority population" such as "the indigenous Britons or Welsh," introduction to *Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies*, 1, 11, and 16.
19. Julia Crick, "Geoffrey and the Prophetic Tradition," in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin*, ed. Siân Echard, *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* 6 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 70 [67–82] citing Joachim of Fiore, *De prophetia ignota: Eine frühe Schrift Joachims von*

- Fiore, ed. Matthias Kaup, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Studien und Texte* 19 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1998), pp. 128–29.
20. Ad Putter, “Finding Time for Romance: Mediaeval Arthurian Literary History,” *Medium Ævum* 63.1 (1994): 12 [1–16].
 21. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 4.
 22. For the French Vulgate Quest, see Albert Pauphilet, ed. *La quête del Saint Graal: roman du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1923) and *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, trans. E. Jane Burns in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, gen. ed. Norris J. Lacy, 5 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 4:3–87.
 23. Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 202–4.
 24. Christopher Brooke, “Geoffrey of Monmouth as a Historian,” in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on His 70th Birthday*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin, and Dorothy Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 78 and 83 [77–91].
 25. Stephen Knight studies only the Arthurian section of Geoffrey’s history in *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 38–67 while Geraldine Heng bases her interpretation of Geoffrey’s history on the Mont Saint-Michel episode of the Arthurian section, “Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Medieval Romance,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.1 (1998): 98–174. For arguments in favor of studying only the Arthurian section, see Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 39 and Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 37–38.
 26. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 48.
 27. Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 19–21, 44–46, and 52–58.
 28. Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 36–39 and 49–51.
 29. See, for example, Peter Korrel, *An Arthurian Triangle: A Study of the Origin, Development and Characterization of Arthur, Guinevere and Modred* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984); Charlotte A. T. Wulf, “A Comparative Study of Wace’s Guenevere in the Twelfth Century,” in *Arthurian Romance and Gender*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 66–78; Fiona Tolhurst, “The Britons as Hebrews, Romans, and Normans: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s British Epic and Reflections of Empress Matilda,” *Arthuriana* 8.4 (1998): 69–87 and “The Once and Future Queen: The Development of Guenevere from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Malory,” *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* 50 (1998): 272–308; and Fiona Tolhurst Neuendorf, “Negotiating Feminist and Historicist Concerns: Guenevere in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*,” *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* 3.2 (1993): 26–44.

30. See, for example, Russell Fraser's introduction to *King Lear* in *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963 and 1972), p. 1177 [1174–81]. Wilfrid Perrett, in contrast, explores how these two versions of the story of Leir and his daughters differ, *The Story of King Lear from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1904; repr. Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010).
31. Echard argues that the parodic elements in Geoffrey's history did not necessarily clash with his "apparent determination to be considered an academic historian," *Arthurian Narrative*, pp. 23 and 33. Brooke, however, views the playfulness of *The History of the Kings of Britain* as parodying and subverting the genre of historiography, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," in *Church and Government*, ed. Brooke, Luscombe, Martin, and Owen, p. 83. Sjoerd Levelt argues that the text presents its sources ironically and thereby "subverts...from within" the historiographical tradition into which it inserts itself, "'This Book, Attractively Composed to Form a Consecutive and Orderly Narrative': The Ambiguity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie*," in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 130 and 135 [130–43]. Valerie I. J. Flint makes the more radical claim that "Geoffrey was primarily a parodist" who intended to question the position of "literate and celibate canons regular and monks," "The *Historia regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Parody and Its Purpose. A Suggestion," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 54 (1979): 467 and 449 [447–68].
32. Gransden claims that Geoffrey abandons the tradition of Christian historiography in *Historical Writing*, p. 204 while Susan M. Shwartz argues that he "is steeped in the tradition of Christian historiography," "The Founding and Self-Betrayal of Britain: An Augustinian Approach to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 10 (1981): 34 [33–53]. For a pro-Norman perspective, see Neil Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xix [ix–lix]. For a pro-Welsh perspective, see John Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 13 (1991): 112 [99–118]. For a pro-Breton perspective, see Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, p. 414 and John J. Parry and Robert A. Caldwell, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 74–75 [72–93].
33. Maureen Fries, "Boethian Themes and Tragic Structure in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," in *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence*, ed. Mary Flowers Braswell and John Bugge (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 29, 30, and 37 [29–42]; Shwartz, "The Founding and Self-Betrayal," 34 and 48.
34. Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 48.
35. Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, pp. 48 and 50.
36. Warren, *History on the Edge*, pp. 35, 37–38, 45–47, and 49.

37. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures 17 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xviii.
38. Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 66, 109, 154, and 47.
39. Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 46–47.
40. Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 46.
41. Charles Beem uses the term ‘female king’ to refer to women who “manipulated and transcended the social and political limitations imposed upon their gender, in order to possess the estate and execute the office of king,” *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 4.
42. For a historicist reading of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* that cautions against over-reading the Pentecostal Oath, see Robert L. Kelly, “Royal Policy and Malory’s Round Table,” *Arthuriana* 14.1 (2004): 43–70.
43. Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 8–9 and 77.
44. Maureen Fries, “Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition,” in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Sally K. Slocum (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), pp. 5–17.
45. Fries, “Female Heroes,” in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 15.
46. Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 2.
47. Judith M. Bennett, “Medievalism and Feminism,” *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 68 (1993): 322 [309–31].
48. Jean Blacker argues for her “belief in the referentiality of historical narrative” in the Middle Ages, *The Faces of Time: Portrayal of the Past in Old French and Latin Historical Narrative of the Anglo-Norman Regnum* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. xiii–xiv. Nancy F. Partner approaches referentiality in a similar manner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 1–8.
49. Nancy F. Partner, “No Sex, No Gender,” *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 68 (1993): 443 and 423–33 [419–43].
50. Fiona Tolhurst, introduction to *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 1–14.
51. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson, introduction to *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 1 [1–21].
52. Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; repr. 2005), p. 1.
53. Joan Kelly, “Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des femmes*, 1400–1789,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 8.1 (1982): 4–28.
54. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and the members of Interscripta, “The Armour of an Alienating Identity,” *Arthuriana* 6.4 (1996): 7 [1–24].

55. Editor Michael D. Reeve and translator Neil Wright offer access to a reliable Vulgate text in *HRB* while Michael A. Faletra offers a recent translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Editions, 2008). See also Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London and New York: Penguin, 1966).
56. Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," 327.
57. Blamires, *The Case for Women*; Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C. W. Marx, eds., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; repr. 2002).
58. Reeve, introduction to *HRB*, pp. vii–viii [vii–lxxvii].

1 Re-reading Empress Matilda as a Female King

1. Shichtman and Finke, "Profiting from the Past," 11.
2. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, pp. 8–9.
3. Beatrice Gottlieb, "The Problem of Feminism in the Fifteenth Century," in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 341 [337–64].
4. Patterson argues that objectivity in the study of history is impossible, *Negotiating the Past*, pp. 41–48.
5. Carolyn Anderson examines the ways in which chronicles express fear of both female power and civil war by sharply limiting the empress's role in their narratives, "Narrating Matilda, 'Lady of the English,' in the *Historia Novella*, the *Gesta Stephani*, and Wace's *roman de Rou*: The Desire for Land and Order," *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History* 29 (1999): 47–49 [47–67].
6. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 4.
7. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 285.
8. John Gillingham, "Killing and Mutilating Political Enemies in the British Isles from the Late Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Century: A Comparative Study," in *Britain and Ireland 900–1300: Insular Responses to Medieval European Change*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 119 [114–34].
9. David Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135–1154* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), p. 1.
10. See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors and completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), Epistola 2, pp. 6–9 and HN 1.1–1.2, pp. 4–7.
11. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 5, 26, and 60. Mary Anne Everett Green interprets the cause of Matilda's failure to achieve coronation as what medieval historian William of Newburgh calls "intolerabili fastu femineo [intolerable feminine arrogance]," *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed., trans., and

- commentary by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy, 2 vols., Aris & Phillips Classical Texts (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1988 and 2007), 1.9.62–63: “Ever since that day when her dangerous rival [Stephen] was brought a prisoner to her feet, the temper of Matilda had undergone a decided change; no longer under the pressure of immediate danger, she manifested that hauteur of manner and wayward self-will which, in the course of time, alienated from her the affections of her adherents, and was, humanly speaking, the sole cause of her speedy overthrow,” *Lives of the Princesses of England*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1849), pp. 144 and 143. Nesta Pain replicates this view of Empress Matilda by asking, “Why, at the most vital period of her life, did she behave with such arrogance and stupidity that she threw away all that she had fought for?” and faulting her for refusing to behave with “the modest and gentle demeanour proper to her sex,” *Empress Matilda: Uncrowned Queen of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), pp. 178 and 91.
12. Green, *Lives of the Princesses*, pp. 143–46; David Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 50; David Crouch, “Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and the Daughter of Zelophehad,” *Journal of Medieval History* 11 (1985): 240 [227–43].
 13. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 41 and 125.
 14. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 84.
 15. H. R. Loyn, *The English Church 940–1154* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), p. 132.
 16. I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 316.
 17. Charlotte A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: The Second Generation*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 164.
 18. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 26.
 19. Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1991); Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 25–62.
 20. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, pp. 64–141; Marjorie Chibnall, “The Empress Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), pp. 279–94.
 21. Beem studies Empress Matilda, Queen Mary I, Queen Anne, and Queen Victoria in *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 1–172.
 22. Crouch, “Robert, Earl of Gloucester,” 228.
 23. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 8 and 7.
 24. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, p. 201.
 25. Carol J. Clover, “Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe,” *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 68 (1993): 379 and 387 [363–87].

26. Pauline Stafford documents the decrease in the frequency of female regency after the late tenth century, "The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Phoenix Mill, UK: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994), pp. 143–67. John Carmi Parsons asserts that, after 1066, a queen consort "rarely, if ever, exercised in her own right either of the central royal functions of warrior or lawgiver," "'Never Was a Body Buried in England with Such Solemnity and Honour': The Burials and Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1997), p. 317 [317–37]. Armin Wolf documents that queens in Europe often served as regents but seldom inherited thrones in their own right, "Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe: When, Where, and Why," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, pp. 169–88. Lois L. Huneycutt makes the more specific claim that, in twelfth-century England, women could transmit power or serve as regents, but they could not rule in their own right, "Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, pp. 189–201.
27. Clover, "Regardless of Sex," 364, 366, and 368–370.
28. Molly Miller, "Matriliney by Treaty: The Pictish Foundation-Legend," in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamund McKitterick, and David Dumville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 149 [133–61].
29. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 7.
30. Beem cites these queens as examples of female rulers, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 31. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records (in its entry for the year 672) that Seaxburh reigned for one year following the death of King Cenwealh of Wessex and (in its entries for 912 through 918) that Æthelflæd had several military successes: she built fortifications in several locations; sent an army into Wales, destroyed Breconanmere, and captured the king's wife and over thirty others; achieved the fortification of Derby; obtained control of Leicester; and had been promised control of York when she died during her eighth year of ruling the Mercians "mid riht hlaforddome [with the right of lordship]," *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 4: MS B, A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices, ed. Simon Taylor, gen. ed. David Dumville and Simon Keynes (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 22 and 49–50. For a Modern English translation, see *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock with David C. Douglas and Susie I. Tucker (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), pp. 22 and 62–67.
31. F. T. Wainwright, "Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians," in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1959), pp. 54 and 56 [53–69].

32. Wainwright, "Æthelflæd," in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. Clemoes, pp. 60–61 and 68–69.
33. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 31.
34. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 31–32.
35. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 32.
36. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 8.
37. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 2 and 6.
38. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 36.
39. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 1.
40. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 41; Heng, "Cannibalism," 121 citing Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951; repr. 1987), 2:178; Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, pp. 56–57.
41. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 8.
42. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 10.
43. Eleanor Searle documents "the complex problems of legitimacy in the England of the late eleventh century" that existed because inheritance among the Normans "could neither be automatic nor governed by rigid rules," "Women and the Legitimation of Succession at the Norman Conquest," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 3 (1980): 159 [159–70].
44. Judith A. Green, *Henry I: King of England and Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 42 and 215–16. Green offers an example of a rival of King Henry I by describing Count Waleran of Meulan's rebellion, p. 179.
45. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 34. Green notes that Henry was the only son of William the Conqueror and Queen Matilda I to be born after their coronations, *Henry I*, p. 20.
46. Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York 1066–1127*, ed. and trans. Charles Johnson, rev. M. Brett, C. N. L. Brooke and M. Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 18.
47. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 43 and 53.
48. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 55 and 53.
49. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 7; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 7: MS E, A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices, ed. Susan Irvine, gen. ed. David Dumville and Simon Keynes (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 110.
50. Ian Short, "Gaimar's Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Liber vetustissimus*," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 69 (1994): 323 [323–43].
51. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 39.
52. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 58, 67, and 26–27. Crouch notes that Henry I's relationship with, and begetting a child upon, Count Waleran of Meulan's sister Elizabeth might have earned the count release from prison following his rebellion against the king, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 25. Bartlett confirms that, with regard to succession, "no serious consideration seems to have been given to his illegitimate sons," *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 9.
53. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 9; Green, *Henry I*, p. 75.

54. Green, *Henry I*, p. 290.
55. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 35; Green, *Henry I*, pp. 135 and 290.
56. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 135 and 290.
57. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 120–21 and 309; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 35; Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 17.
58. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 11.
59. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 309 and 164–67.
60. Searle, “Women and the Legitimation of Succession,” 160.
61. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 168–69.
62. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 26.
63. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 24; Bartlett explains the difference between regular barons and the great earls, or magnates, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 13.
64. John Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 289.
65. Green discusses how valuable the newly widowed Empress was to her father and establishes that Matilda was born in February 1102, so in May 1125, she would have been twenty-three years old, *Henry I*, pp. 190 and 67. Chibnall concurs that Emperor Henry V’s death left Matilda “a childless widow of twenty-three,” “Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 280.
66. Green, *Henry I*, p. 191. Bartlett notes that William Clito’s acquisition of Flanders made him a threat to King Henry I’s control of succession to the English throne, but William’s death while fighting in Flanders in 1128 eliminated that threat, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 21.
67. Green, *Henry I*, p. 191.
68. Green, *Henry I*, p. 290.
69. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 26.
70. John of Salisbury records this claim (one that offends him) regarding King Henry I’s great power in Letter 275, *The Letters of John of Salisbury, Volume 2: The Later Letters (1163–1180)*, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 2:580.
71. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 36; Green, *Henry I*, p. 193; Edmund King, introduction to *HN*, p. xl [xvii–cxiv].
72. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 289–90.
73. *HN* 1.2, pp. 6–7.
74. *HN* 1.2, pp. 6–7.
75. Green, *Henry I*, p. 194; Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 6.
76. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 36 citing *HN* 1.2, pp. 6–7.
77. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 14, 195, and 292; *HN* 1.3, pp. 8–9.
78. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 24.
79. Green, *Henry I*, p. 290; King, introduction to *HN*, p. xl.
80. Clover, “Regardless of Sex,” 370.
81. Green, *Henry I*, p. 212; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 38. Beem states that the twenty-five-year-old Matilda had objected to marrying the fourteen-year-old Geoffrey of Anjou, p. 37, and Green states that “the

- empress initially reacted badly to the prospect of marrying the son of a mere count," *Henry I*, p. 198.
82. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 38.
 83. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 291 and 199. Green explains that, during King Henry I's reign, the English law code appears to have been expanded to address noblemen's "ongoing" concern about "the hasty remarriage of widows"; as a result, the king was to be consulted regarding the marriages of the female relatives of his barons, and the marriage of a daughter who was the king's heir was to be arranged in consultation with the barons, *Henry I*, p. 46. Henry's unilateral decision about Matilda's second marriage is an extreme example of what historian Michael M. Sheehan describes as the attempts of Norman aristocrats to retain some control over the institution of marriage through the "precocious" development of "the secular rite of marriage . . . in that part of North-West Europe under Norman control or influence," "Choice of Marriage Partner in the Middle Ages: Development and Mode of Application of a Theory of Marriage," in *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, ed. Carol Neel (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 2004), p. 176 [157–91].
 84. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 10 and 145.
 85. Green, *Henry I*, p. 212. According to Green, Bishop Roger of Salisbury later broke his oath on the grounds of the lack of consultation preceding Matilda's second marriage, *Henry I*, p. 194. Beem notes that a number of bishops and barons used the same rationale for siding with Stephen, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 37.
 86. Green, *Henry I*, p. 212.
 87. Green, *Henry I*, p. 212.
 88. Green, *Henry I*, p. 217; Roger of Howden, *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 51 (London: Longman & Company, 1868–71), 1:187; Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 61; King, introduction to *HN*, p. xl.
 89. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 39. Geoffrey of Anjou might have hoped to benefit from the fact that, in Norman-controlled England, women could channel "rights of inheritance" to males who were not part of "the 'pool' of heirs," Searle, "Women and the Legitimisation of Succession," 161.
 90. Crouch, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 228; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 15.
 91. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 46.
 92. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 35. Green concurs: "The idea that daughters should share an inheritance—which, it is thought, applied in Normandy—was at some stage introduced into Anglo-Norman practice," *Henry I*, p. 232.
 93. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 43.
 94. Crouch credits Robert of Gloucester with citing this passage from the book of Numbers in order to express concern about Matilda's marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou, thereby "making a carefully loaded comment on

- his sister's claim to the throne," "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 233. This conclusion, however, is conjecture.
95. Green, *Henry I*, p. 218.
 96. *HN* 1.11, pp. 24–25.
 97. R. H. C. Davis, *King Stephen 1135–1154*, 3rd edn. (London and New York: Longman, 1990), pp. 12–14.
 98. Green, *Henry I*, p. 320.
 99. Marjorie Chibnall, "Normandy," in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 105 [93–115].
 100. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 35.
 101. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 40 and 51.
 102. Elisabeth van Houts, "Latin and French as Languages of the Past in Normandy During the Reign of Henry II: Robert of Torigni, Stephen of Rouen, and Wace," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 66 [53–77].
 103. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 6 citing M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 215.
 104. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 35.
 105. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 66.
 106. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 67 citing Amalie Fössel's study of medieval German queens, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), pp. 106–7 and 159–61.
 107. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 67.
 108. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 40.
 109. Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis [Historia ecclesiastica]*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols., Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 5.10.1, pp. 200–1. William of Malmesbury reports that Lombard and Lotharingian princes traveled to England in the years following Emperor Henry V's death "ut eam sibi dominam requirerent [in order that they could ask for her to be their lady]," *HN* 1.1, pp. 4–5.
 110. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 280.
 111. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 280.
 112. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 18.
 113. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 40.
 114. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 70 citing *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, ed. P. Marchegay and A. Salmon, with an introduction by Émile Mabille, vol. 1 (Paris: Ve. Jules Renouard, 1856–71), p. xv n1, a charter dated June 29, 1130 that—through expressing respect for Matilda's status—appears to reflect Geoffrey of Anjou's desire to reconcile with his wife.

115. Partner, "No Sex," 439.
116. Green, *Henry I*, p. 222; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 47.
117. GS 1.12, p. 22.
118. Crouch, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 238.
119. Paul Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John and the Politics of Anglo-Norman England: The Rise and Survival of a Twelfth-Century Royal Servant," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 71 (1996): 368–70 [358–83].
120. Clarke, introduction to *Vita Merlini*, p. 6.
121. Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John," 367.
122. Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John," 368–69.
123. Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John," 369.
124. Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John," 366–67.
125. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen*, pp. 50–51.
126. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen*, pp. 58–59.
127. Nikolai Tolstoy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Merlin Legend," *Arthurian Literature* 25 (2008): 13 [1–42].
128. Davis, *King Stephen*, p. 24.
129. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 22.
130. Davis, *King Stephen*, pp. 26–27.
131. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 411.
132. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 125; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 35.
133. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 126. H. E. Salter dates the arrest at Oxford of the bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln to June 24, 1139, "A Charter of Stephen of January 1139," *The English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 114–15 [114–16]. Davis discusses Waleran's machinations, *King Stephen*, p. 29.
134. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 44; Davis, *King Stephen*, p. 32.
135. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 126.
136. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 126.
137. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 48.
138. Loyn, *The English Church*, pp. 126–27.
139. William of Malmesbury sharply criticizes Queen Adeliza's betrayal of Empress Matilda, *HN*, 2.31, pp. 60–63, while Bartlett records it, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 41.
140. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 47.
141. Crouch argues that Robert's primary motive for abandoning Stephen's cause was frustration with the king's favoring the earl's rivals, the Beaumonts (especially Count Waleran), not the oath that Robert allowed to "slip his mind quite comfortably for two years," "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 231–32.
142. Crouch, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 238.
143. Tatlock argues that Geoffrey of Monmouth completed his work on *The History of the Kings of Britain* sometime in 1138, *The Legendary History*, pp. 433–34. Neil Wright concurs with this date, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xi–xvi, as does Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes," 100. For Henry of Huntingdon's account of discovering that Geoffrey's history

- existed, see his *EWB* 1.558–59, a text which also appears in Robert of Torigni, *Chronica*, 4:65–75.
144. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 40.
 145. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 40.
 146. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 40.
 147. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 123.
 148. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 371.
 149. Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 124.
 150. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 49; *feme sole* is a term Beem uses on pp. 7 and 46.
 151. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 51.
 152. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 49. The sketch “Empress Matilda Enthroned” by Lora Price is reproduced with permission.
 153. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 25; Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 126.
 154. Chibnall, “Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 279.
 155. Short, “Gaimar’s Epilogue,” 337 citing Robert B. Patterson, “William of Malmesbury’s Robert of Gloucester: A Re-evaluation of the ‘Historia Novella,’” *The American Historical Review* 70 (1965): 983–97. Crouch corroborates this date, “Robert, Earl of Gloucester,” 233.
 156. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 48; Chibnall, “Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 284.
 157. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 48.
 158. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 47–48.
 159. Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6.13.36, pp. 512–15.
 160. GS 2.93, pp. 178–79.
 161. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 48.
 162. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 26.
 163. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 49.
 164. H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of MSS in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London: British Museum, 1883), 1:283.
 165. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, 1:283.
 166. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 50.
 167. HN 3.45, pp. 88–89.
 168. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 53.
 169. R. H. C. Davis, introduction to GS, p. xxxiii [xi–xl].
 170. Loyn raises this possibility but notes that, by 1141, “Henry [of Blois] himself had substantially moved back to Stephen’s side,” *The English Church*, p. 127.
 171. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 50.
 172. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 50.
 173. John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. and trans. P. McGurk, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 3:294–95.
 174. John of Worcester, *The Chronicle*, 3:294–95.
 175. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 25 and 50.
 176. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 50.
 177. GS 1.22, pp. 46–47; 1.58–59, pp. 118–21; 1.60, pp. 122–23; and 2.93, pp. 178–79 (villainizes the empress); 1.25, pp. 54–55 and 2.95, pp. 186–87

- (dismisses her claim to the English throne); 1.59–60, pp. 120–21 (dismisses female kingship). Beem, in *The Lioness Roared*, p. 50, comes to the conclusion that Matilda was king based on GS, 1.58, pp. 118–19.
178. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 50.
 179. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 53.
 180. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 52–53.
 181. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 53.
 182. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 124.
 183. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 51.
 184. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 51.
 185. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 51.
 186. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 51.
 187. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 52.
 188. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 52.
 189. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 59; Chibnall, “Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 284; cf. Anderson who interprets the empress’s use of the title *domina* as an admission of “her legal loss of power,” “Narrating Matilda,” 52.
 190. Chibnall states that Henry Plantagenet was born on March 4, 1133 at Le Mans, “Matilda and Her Sons,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 281; Green, *Henry I*, p. 213.
 191. Green, *Henry I*, p. 217.
 192. King, introduction to *HN*, p. xli.
 193. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 21.
 194. Green, *Henry I*, p. 218.
 195. Green, *Henry I*, p. 217; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 37.
 196. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45.
 197. Vitalis reports the dispute over the castles, but he defines it as one between King Henry I and Count Geoffrey of Anjou: the count demanded possession of some castles in Normandy that he claimed should have become his property upon his marriage to Empress Matilda, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6.13.18, pp. 444–45. William of Malmesbury mentions the dispute between Empress Matilda’s father and husband in the context of King Henry’s death, saying that Henry left his possessions “*citra et ultra mare* [on this side and on the far side of the sea]” to Matilda as his heir at a time when he was “*subiratus* [somewhat angry]” at his son-in-law due to Count Geoffrey’s “*et minis et iniuriis aliquantis* [considerable threats and affronts],” *HN* 1.11, pp. 24–25. Historian C. Warren Hollister is one of the proponents of the theory that the dispute over castles cost Matilda her father’s throne, arguing that the Norman barons “would probably have had no choice but to accept her in December 1135, had it not been for her violent break with her father several months before,” *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, Hambledon Press History Series (London: Hambledon Continuum, 1986), pp. 162–63.
 198. Two historians who propose Matilda’s pregnancy as a likely explanation of her supposed delay in taking action are Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45

- and van Houts, but van Houts offers both pregnancy-related illness and the fear of losing a potential heir as motives for Matilda's delay, "The State of Research: Women in Medieval History and Literature," *Journal of Medieval History* 20 (1994): 288 [277–92].
199. Beem specifies a delay of three months, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45, while Chibnall specifies two months and provides the date of William Plantagenet's birth, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 283.
 200. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45.
 201. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45.
 202. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, pp. 281–82.
 203. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 283.
 204. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 221–22; Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 282.
 205. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 282.
 206. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 283.
 207. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, pp. 282–83.
 208. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 283.
 209. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 283.
 210. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 281; Green, *Henry I*, p. 222.
 211. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 282.
 212. Green, *Henry I*, p. 222.
 213. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 44–45; Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 123.
 214. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 123; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 45.
 215. GS 1.3, pp. 6–9.
 216. HN 1.14, pp. 28–29.
 217. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 46.
 218. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 282.
 219. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 282.
 220. Chibnall explains that King David of Scotland's "gratitude to King Henry [I] and affection for his sister [Queen Matilda] were bound to be tempered by a prudent regard for the interests of his own kingdom. [Empress] Matilda might have fared better if he had been no more than earl of Huntingdon when she made her bid for the English throne," *The Empress Matilda*, p. 12.

- Bartlett identifies the roots of King David's commitment to Matilda's cause (the marriage of David's sister to King Henry, and David's being "an English earl before he was a Scottish king") as well as acknowledges the Scottish king's ability to pursue his own interests while advancing his niece's cause, such as when he led forces southwards both immediately after Stephen's coronation (during the winter of 1135–36) and twice more in 1138, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 80 and 79.
221. John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), ch. 42, p. 84, my translation.
 222. John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ch. 42, p. 84.
 223. John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ch. 42, p. 83. Searle discusses how Edith (later Queen Matilda II) was at the center of a dispute over whether she could marry Lord Alan the Red of Richmond, "Women and the Legitimation of Succession," 166–67.
 224. John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ch. 42, p. 85. For further information on the marriage, see King, introduction to *HN*, p. lii; Green, *Henry I*, p. 55 citing Gilbert Foliot, *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 65 and John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*, ch. 42, p. 83. Green concludes that Queen Matilda II's father King Malcolm III of Scotland had intended her to marry, not to live a monastic life, *Henry I*, p. 54.
 225. Loyn explains that, after Pope Innocent II, the popes leaned toward the Angevins but not enough to abandon Stephen, *The English Church*, p. 134. Beem describes Stephen's gift-giving to ensure the outcome he desired, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 48.
 226. Robinson describes the conferral of the legation on Henry of Blois, *The Papacy*, p. 173.
 227. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 56; Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen*, pp. 177–79.
 228. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 58.
 229. John of Worcester, *The Chronicle*, 3:298–99.
 230. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, 1:284.
 231. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 26.
 232. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 129.
 233. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 60.
 234. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 284.
 235. H. W. C. Davis, "Henry of Blois and Brian Fitz-Count," *The English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 298 [297–303].
 236. Davis, "Henry of Blois," 299.
 237. Davis, "Henry of Blois," 299, 302, and 300.
 238. Davis, "Henry of Blois," 300.
 239. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 284.
 240. Clarke, introduction to *Vita Merlini*, p. 6; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 60.
 241. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 59.

242. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 10.
243. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 60.
244. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 42.
245. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 285.
246. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 69.
247. J. C. Holt explains that the Treaty of Winchester was a document in which "Stephen recognized Henry [later Henry II] as his heir *jure hereditario*, promising to sustain him as son and heir in all things and against all men," a promise that implicitly identifies Stephen as the lawful king, "1153: The Treaty of Winchester," in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 312 [291–316]; Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 60.
248. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 61; Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, pp. 288–89.
249. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 288.
250. Chibnall, "Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Parsons and Wheeler, p. 288.
251. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 10.
252. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 10 citing *Recueil des actes de Henry II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, 4 vols., Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1916–27), no. 682, p. 306.
253. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 10 citing *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. Hubert Hall, 3 vols., Rolls Series (London: Longman & Company, 1896), 1:251.
254. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 11.
255. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 61.
256. Simon Meecham-Jones, introduction to *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 5 [1–24].
257. Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, p. 3.
258. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 9.
259. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, p. 25.

2 Geoffrey's History as Preparation for a Female King

1. Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966).
2. Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 162.
3. H. E. Salter, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford," *The English Historical Review* 34 (1919): 383–85 [382–85].

4. Michael J. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), p. 2. According to Salter, Geoffrey signed two of the extant charters as *magister*: one as “magistro Galfrido Artour [teacher Geoffrey Arthur]” and another as “mag. Gaufridus electus sancti Asaphi [teacher Geoffrey, bishop-elect of Saint Asaph],” “Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford,” 384.
5. J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae and Its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), p. 442. Archdeacon Walter is addressed as provost of St. George's College in one of Pope Eugenius III's bulls, Salter, “Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford,” 385.
6. Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 43.
7. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp. 2–3.
8. Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 43.
9. Tolstoy, “Geoffrey of Monmouth,” 9 and 11.
10. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 5 citing *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), 1:360. Robert of Torigni's account of 1152 includes Geoffrey's appointment as bishop, *Chronica*, 4:168.
11. Curley notes that “Geoffrey was the first to be called bishop of Saint Asaph, but it is unlikely that he ever traveled to North Wales to take up residence,” *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 5 citing S. M. Harris, “Liturgical Commemorations of Welsh Saints (II), St. Asaph,” *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales* 6 (1956): 5–24. O. J. Padel notes that “it is uncertain whether Geoffrey ever actually visited his see,” “Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 51 (2006): 58 [37–65] citing John Edward Lloyd: “It is not surprising to find no evidence that Geoffrey ever visited his episcopal seat,” “Geoffrey of Monmouth,” *The English Historical Review* 57 (1942): 465 [460–68].
12. Padel, “Development of the Merlin Legend,” 59. For the description of the Diocese of Saint Asaph, see Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York*, pp. 206–7.
13. Shichtman and Finke, “Profiting from the Past,” 20.
14. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 5 citing *Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066–1154*, in *Regesta regis Stephani ac Mathildis imperatricis*, ed. H. A. Cronne and R. H. C. Davis, vol. 3 of 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 3.272.97–99. Holt carefully distinguishes between the Treaty of Winchester agreed to on November 6, 1153 and the Westminster charter, which was “attested by the great men of both parties” and announced terms already agreed upon, “1153: The Treaty,” in *The Anarchy*, ed. King, pp. 295–96.
15. *Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum*, 3.272.97–99. For discussions of Geoffrey's witnessing the Westminster charter, see Korrel, *An Arthurian Triangle*, p. 104 and Parry and Caldwell, “Geoffrey of Monmouth,” *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Loomis, p. 74. For detailed

- discussion of the Treaty of Winchester and the charter of Westminster, see Holt, "1153: The Treaty," in *The Anarchy*, ed. King, pp. 291–316.
16. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 396–97 and 400.
 17. Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 121.
 18. Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes," 112.
 19. Paul Dalton, "The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*: History, Prophecy, Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 689 [688–712].
 20. For example, Shichtman and Finke read Geoffrey's Arturus as "a social signifier whose function was to smooth over the ideological conflicts created by the Norman colonization of England and the uneasy and unequal cohabitation of three distinct cultures—Norman, Saxon and Celtic," "Profiting from the Past," 4. Similarly, Barefield sees Geoffrey's history as helping "to legitimate the current, often recently installed Plantagenets and other Anglo-Norman rulers," "Gender and the Creation of Lineage," 1. Warren interprets Geoffrey's presentation of 'empire'-building as more conflicted, *History on the Edge*, pp. 25–59.
 21. Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 42. For discussion of Dudo of Saint-Quentin, see Eleanor Searle, "Fact and Pattern in Heroic History: Dudo of Saint-Quentin," *Viator* 15 (1984): 128 and 137 [119–37]. For Dudo's history, see Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *Gesta Normannorum*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998).
 22. Echard demonstrates that "the British cannot be defeated by the Romans in straightforward battle" but rather "only if they betray themselves" and, despite the Britons' tendency to do that, conquering them is never "swift or easy," "Whyche Thyng," 117 and 120.
 23. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 50.
 24. Hanning notes that for Geoffrey "the Saxons cease to be a scourge of God," *The Vision of History*, p. 170.
 25. In *HRB*, Geoffrey of Monmouth suggests Britain's greatness through the conquests of Rome first by Belinus and Brennius (43.209–11) and then by Constantinus I (80.163–64) as well as through Arturus's planned conquest of Rome (176.480–81). He reinforces his readers' impression that the Britons are God's chosen people through both Cador's speech about how their former valor has deteriorated because of idleness (158.437–45) and Arturus's motivational speech to his troops before his war against Rome (169.268–89).
 26. *DEB* 3.1, pp. 89 and 16. Bede's description of the island identifies Belgic Gaul as the closest port location, *HE* 1.1, pp. 14–15.
 27. *DEB* 3.1, pp. 89 and 16.
 28. Although Geoffrey adds a complication to his description of the landscape by presenting the twenty-eight cities that Gildas presents neutrally, and Bede presents positively, as consisting of two groups (one of functioning, Christian cities, and another of cities that have fallen into ruin), he does not blame any particular group (Britons or Normans) for the situation, *HRB* 5.38–42 cf. *DEB* 3.2, pp. 89 and 16, and *HE* 1.1, pp. 16–17.

29. Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 45.
30. Korrel interprets Geoffrey's situating Caerleon-on-Usk in Monmouthshire, which Robert of Gloucester controlled, as a means of pleasing the earl, *An Arthurian Triangle*, p. 127. In addition, as Tatlock notes, Geoffrey creates the figure of Eldol, the gallant earl of Gloucester (*HRB* 105.480–87); emphasizes the port of Southampton, the name of which derives from Hamo, a common name in Robert's family (66.301–10); describes Gloucester's founding in detail (68.331–43); and has King Arviragus buried in Gloucester (69.369–71) as well as an archbishop of London receive promotion from the bishopric there (179.87–89), *The Legendary History*, pp. 398, 48, and 46. Geoffrey also creates the figure of Bishop Eldadus of Gloucester (125.158–59) who, according to Knight, is a version of Saint Aldage who has links with Gloucester and Oxford as well as the figure of King Caduallo's nephew Brianus (191.253–55 and 196.384–418) that functions as "a tribute to Robert's own son Brian," *Arthurian Literature*, pp. 26, 169–70, and 46. E. M. R. Ditmas detects a pro-Robert pattern in Geoffrey's allusions to Cornwall: "The areas with which Geoffrey appears to be familiar show a striking correlation with the group of manors which were an annex to the Honour of Gloucester," "A Reappraisal of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Allusions to Cornwall," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 48 (1973): 524 [510–24]. O. J. Padel notes that Cornwall is important in Geoffrey's history for three reasons: "Cornwall tends to supply the ruling lines of Britain when the line fails and has to be replaced," "receives special emphasis at the beginning of the work," and is a land with which King Arturus "is closely linked," "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 8 (1984): 5 [1–27].
31. Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, pp. 46 and 398.
32. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 1; *HB* 47, pp. 73 and 32.
33. Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, pp. 74–75.
34. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 9.
35. Curley notes an exception to Geoffrey's pro-Monmouth rule: Geoffrey changes the location of the discovery of Merlinus from campus Elleti in the Glywysing district near Monmouth (where the *HB* locates it) to Carmarthen; however, this choice could be a function of Geoffrey's desire to highlight old Roman towns in his narrative and, in this case, to give Merlinus greater status by associating him with a Roman town, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp. 37–38.
36. The survival of three versions of the *HRB*'s dedication addressed to particular Norman nobles raises the possibility that one or more of the three was produced after the composition of the main text.
37. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xvi. Gillingham concurs with Wright's analysis, "Context and Purposes," 100 n5.
38. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xvi; Michael D. Reeve, "The Transmission of the *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991): 73 [73–117]. Wright's edition of Geoffrey's history supersedes both *La légende arthurienne: études et documents*, ed. Edmond Faral, 3 vols.

- (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1929) and *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth with Contributions to the Study of Its Place in Early British History by Acton Griscom, M.A., Together with a Literal Translation of the Welsh Manuscript No. LXI of Jesus College, Oxford by Robert Ellis Jones, S. T. D.* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1929; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977). In the latter edition, Griscom argues for April 1136 as the initial publication date of Geoffrey's history, part 1, p. 42 [3–216].
39. Reeve, "The Transmission," 94.
 40. R. H. C. Davis faults Stephen for allowing the powerful baron Baldwin of Redvers and his fellow rebels "not only to go free, but also to take their possessions with them and to adhere to any lord they wished, which suggested they had been fighting a just and honourable war instead of a rebellion" in 1136; for giving up too quickly on establishing peace in Normandy in 1137; for alienating his own brother Henry through excluding him from the see of the archbishop of Canterbury from November 1136 until the vacancy was filled in December 1138; and for arresting Bishop Roger of Salisbury, Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, and Bishop Nigel of Ely in June 1139, *King Stephen*, pp. 24 and 26–30.
 41. Dalton, "Eustace Fitz John," 370–71 citing David Crouch, "The March and the Welsh Kings," in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 276 and n50 [255–77].
 42. Dalton, "The Topical Concerns," 694.
 43. David N. Dumville cites the conclusion of historian R. H. C. Davis who states in a letter dated July 23, 1981: "In 1138 it would surely have been clear to all that civil war was on the way," in "An Early Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* and the Circulation of Some Latin Histories in Twelfth-Century Normandy," *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985): 27 n107 [1–36], repr. in *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1990), pp. 1–36.
 44. Blacker contrasts Geoffrey's relative absence in his text with the intrusiveness of Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury, *The Faces of Time*, p. 2.
 45. My translation of *consul* relies on R. E. Latham's entry for the word in the *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List: From British and Irish Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 110. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xiv n20; Dumville refers to "the apostrophe of Earl Robert—as *consul auguste*, not by name" and asserts, "That *consul* cannot be a suitable appellation for King Stephen seems self-evident," adding that the label is appropriate for the earl because "Robert is known as a patron of letters," "An Early Text," 19.
 46. Thomson and Winterbottom, introduction to *Gesta regum Anglorum*, p. xli; Diana Greenway, introduction to *Historia Anglorum*, by Henry of Huntingdon, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. lviii [xxiii–clxxiii].
 47. Crick links the three dedicatees by explaining that Waleran was "a Norman noble whose only connection with Robert can have been in juxtaposition

- with Stephen, whom Waleran supported until 1141," *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth* 4, p. 113. Parenthetical references to the Robert-only version will be to *HRB* 1.1–3.23 and those to the Robert–Waleran and Stephen–Robert versions to Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xiii–xiv.
48. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xii; Crouch, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 227.
 49. Tolstoy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," 7. Scholars who view the double dedications as pleas for political unity include Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xv and Walter F. Schirmer, *Die frühen Darstellungen des Arthurstoffes* (Cologne–Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1958), pp. 25–28. Dalton views the double dedications as reflecting the *HRB*'s "pacificatory purpose," "The Topical Concerns," 707. Warren notes how the *HRB*'s dedication "rearranges the doubleness of the patron-client relation, just as it rearranges names in the text" and figuratively "negotiates a settlement of the differences between political rivals and between empires past and present," *History on the Edge*, p. 29. Curley interprets Geoffrey's double dedications as "attempts by Geoffrey to curry favor with powerful and wealthy men in an effort to gain patronage and preferment," *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 9. Shichtman and Finke note that Geoffrey's praise of Waleran in "exactly the same terms" as Robert must have made the "sincerity" of the document seem seriously "strained," or at least "must have either seemed awkward or a way of his covering his bets," "Profiting from the Past," 15–17.
 50. Padel, "Development of the Merlin Legend," 42; Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 9; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini / Life of Merlin*, ed. with introduction, facing translation, textual commentary, name notes index and translations of the *Lailoken* tales by Basil Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), lines 7–9, pp. 52–53.
 51. Wright notes that this dedication's "place in the text-history of the *Historia* has yet to be established," introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xii n17. Jacob Hammer asserts that the blank dedication is Geoffrey's work, "Remarks on the Sources and Textual History of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America* 2 (1943/44): 529–30 [501–64].
 52. Reeve, introduction to *HRB*, p. ix.
 53. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xii n17.
 54. Reeve, "The Transmission," 81 nn19–20 citing the June 1989 informal comments of Neil Wright and the suggestion of Mary Garrison that the missing words in the dedication were "left for a rubricator."
 55. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xiv–xv, with references to the full texts of the three named dedications by chapter and line number, pp. xiii–xiv; Reeve, "The Transmission," 76 and 111.
 56. For discussions of the double dedication, see Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 9; Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xiv–xv; and (although now superseded by recent scholarship) Griscom, *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, part 1, pp. 90–94.

57. Reeve, "The Transmission," 76 citing Ernst Brugger, "Zu Galfrid von Monmouths *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 57 (1933): 271–76 [257–312].
58. Although Dumville argues that the Bern copy of the *HRB* could not have been a presentation-copy for Stephen because its parchment is of uneven quality, its paleography suggests that it was "written hastily and carelessly," and it was "physically prefixed to an already existing copy of Aelred of Rievaulx's *Vita Edwardi*," he assumes the existence of "the original copy dedicated to Stephen and Robert," "An Early Text," 21–22 and 25.
59. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xv–xvi.
60. Dumville, "An Early Text," 25.
61. Dumville, "An Early Text," 20. The Stephen–Robert dedication appears in Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xiii, 4.3–4 [xiii–xiv].
62. Reeve, introduction to *HRB*, pp. ix–x; Dumville concurs that either the Robert-only or Robert–Waleran "must be original," "An Early Text," 19.
63. Wright states that the Robert-only version could be the original, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xiv, and Reeve concurs, introduction to *HRB*, pp. ix–x. However, Reeve suggests that "the double dedication seems the more rounded of the two" (compared to the Robert-only version) although conceding that "that may be an illusion created by familiarity with it," "The Transmission," 78. Gillingham argues that both *consul* (177.1) and *dux* (2.17) are appropriate titles for Robert, "Context and Purposes," 100 n6.
64. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 9; Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
65. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 208.
66. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, pp. 208–9 and 12.
67. The Robert–Waleran dedication appears in Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, pp. xiii–xiv, and line numbers are taken from this edition.
68. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 30.
69. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 37.
70. Curley concludes that the Robert–Waleran dedication "would make little political sense . . . after 1138 when their allegiances were divided" without explaining why Geoffrey would not have used the dedication to encourage political enemies to unite behind a king-candidate, and he argues that the Stephen–Robert dedication points to "a date between April 1136, when Robert allied himself with Stephen, and June 1138, when he broke with him," *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 8.
71. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 30. Crouch asserts that the Robert–Waleran version of the dedication—with its invocation of the two men as joint pillars of the kingdom—makes sense only during "the period 1136–7" when both men still supported Stephen, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester," 230.
72. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen*, p. 131.
73. Wright, introduction to *HRB Bern*, p. xv.
74. Dumville, "An Early Text," 27.

75. The information cited here contradicts Knight's characterization of the Norman aristocrats who embraced Geoffrey's history as "most unlikely to have understood Latin" and requiring oral translation into French "at their gatherings," *Arthurian Literature*, p. 40 as well as Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman's statement that "the Norman patrons of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* would almost certainly not have been able to read it," "The Mont St. Michel Giant: Sexual Violence and Imperialism in the Chronicles of Wace and Laȝamon," in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 58 [56–74].
76. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 67.
77. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 68.
78. In the *HRB*, Leir and his sons-in-law (31.250–54) as well as three pairs of brothers fight civil wars: Marganus and Cunedagius (32.270–83), Ferreux and Porrex (33.292–304), and Belinus and Brennius (35.1–41.154).
79. Dalton, "The Topical Concerns," 691 and 702.
80. Shwartz argues that Geoffrey's history is replete with biblical references (specifically to the books of Kings and 1 and 2 Samuel), but she neither provides evidence of Geoffrey's paraphrasing or quoting particular biblical passages nor supports her claim that Geoffrey's history is thoroughly Augustinian, "The Founding and Self-Betrayal," 37.
81. Dudo of Saint-Quentin had used legendary material to praise the Normans while William of Poitiers, the court historian of William the Conqueror, had written a laudatory biography of the Conqueror. See Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *Gesta Normannorum*; William of Poitiers, *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, trans. R. H. C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a discussion of these two historians, see Marjorie Chibnall, "Charter and Chronicle: The Use of Archive Sources by Norman Historians," in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on His 70th Birthday*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin, and Dorothy Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 4–5 [1–17].
82. Christopher Brooke, "Geoffrey of Monmouth as a Historian," in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on His 70th Birthday*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin, and Dorothy Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 85 [77–91].
83. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 57.
84. Because few of the eighty-seven manuscripts that contain *The Prophecies of Merlin* separate from the entire history are early, and manuscript lists do not clarify how closely these copies of *The Prophecies* resemble the text within the history, "the best evidence for separate circulation remains Geoffrey's own statement and a notorious quotation" by Orderic Vitalis from what he calls a *Merlini libellus* 'little book of Merlin'—a text

- to which Vitalis refers within the time frame of Henry I's being alive, Reeve, "The Transmission," 94. Geoffrey's statement appears in the preface to *The Prophecies of Merlin*, HRB 109.1–110.20 and Vitalis's quotation in *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6.12.47, pp. 384–87. Reeve provides manuscript evidence to document the separate circulation of *The Prophecies*, "The Transmission," 94–97.
85. Putter refers to Sir Thomas Malory, the *Merlin* continuator, and historian Robert Mannyng as integrating romance into their texts, "Finding Time for Romance," 12.
 86. *The Prophecies of Merlin* say, "Mulieres incessu serpentes fient, et omnis gressus earum superbia replebitur [Women will become snakes in their movement, and pride will fill their every step]"; "Ventres matrum secabuntur, et infantes abortiui erunt [The wombs of mothers will be split open, and the infants will be aborted]; and, of seven lions, "Fetore narium mulieres corrumpent et proprias communes facient [By the stink of their nostrils, they will corrupt women and make their own (women) common property]," HRB 115.122–23, 112.53–54, and 116.229–30.
 87. Michael J. Curley notes that the *Historia Brittonum* contains both the battle of the red and white dragons and the boy-prophet's alternating use of the terms *vermes* 'worms' and *dracones* 'dragons/snakes' for those creatures, "Animal Symbolism in the Prophecies of Merlin," in *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and Its Legacy*, ed. Willene B. Clark and Meradith T. McMunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 157 [151–63].
 88. Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6.12.47, pp. 384–89.
 89. Curley, "Animal Symbolism," in *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages*, ed. Clark and McMunn, p. 160.
 90. Geraldine Heng discusses Mount Aravius as Snowdon and potentially as "the Arabian mountain," "Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Medieval Romance," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.1 (1998): 118–19 [98–174].
 91. Green, *Henry I*, pp. 166–67.
 92. Dalton asserts both that "the eagle is easily interpreted as Empress Matilda, who suffered a broken covenant when Anglo-Norman barons ignored their oaths of 1127" and that Matilda "was certainly identified as the eagle in some medieval commentaries on the *Prophecies*," "The Topical Concerns," 698.
 93. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 57.
 94. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini*, lines 930–40, pp. 102–3.
 95. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, pp. 36–37; Flint, "Parody and Its Purpose," 454 and 456; Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 124; Neil Wright, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Bede," *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986): 27–59; Neil Wright, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas," *Arthurian Literature* 2 (1982): 1–40; and Neil Wright, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas Revisited," *Arthurian Literature* 4 (1985): 155–63.
 96. David N. Dumville has argued that this preface describing the composition process was added to the text around the middle of the eleventh century,

- “Nennius’ and the *Historia Brittonum*,” *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975–76): 94 [78–95], repr. in *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1990), pp. 78–95; *HB* preface, pp. 50 and 9.
97. *HB* 1–6, pp. 59 and 18; Fries, “Female Heroes,” in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, pp. 6–9 and 15.
98. *HB* 10, pp. 60 and 19.
99. *HB* 10, pp. 60 and 19.
100. *HB* 13, pp. 61 and 20; 15, pp. 62 and 21.
101. *DEB* 28.1, pp. 99 and 29; 34.3, pp. 103 and 33; and 34.6–35.3, pp. 103 and 34.
102. *DEB* 43.2, pp. 108 and 40.
103. *DEB* 50.6, pp. 112 and 45; 28.1, pp. 99 and 29; 28.3, pp. 100 and 30; 31.1, pp. 101 and 31; and 32.2, pp. 101 and 32.
104. *DEB* 6.2, pp. 91 and 18.
105. *DEB* 70.2, pp. 121 and 56.
106. *DEB* 70.2, pp. 121 and 56.
107. *DEB* 47.4, pp. 110 and 43.
108. *DEB* 1.9, pp. 88 and 14.
109. *DEB* 1.9, pp. 88 and 14.
110. According to the general index of the *HE*, Bede includes forty-eight female figures and 489 male ones, pp. 595–618.
111. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99; 1.27, pp. 100–103; and 4.20, pp. 400–01.
112. Fries, “Female Heroes,” in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, pp. 12–15.
113. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99; 4.3, pp. 344–45; and 5.19, pp. 526–29.
114. *HE* 5.19, pp. 524–27.
115. *HE* 5.7, pp. 472–73.
116. Bede mentions the female martyr-saints Agatha, Eulalia, Thecla, Euphemia, Agnes, and Cecilia while Æthelthryth receives his enthusiastic praise for possessing royal blood, choosing to enter the cloister after marrying, devoting the rest of her life to God’s service, and remaining incorrupt after sixteen years in her tomb, *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99.
117. Peter (*HE* 1.32, pp. 114–15; 2.1, pp. 130–31; 2.4, pp. 144–45; 2.6, pp. 154–55; 2.10, pp. 170–71; 2.11, pp. 174–75; 2.18, pp. 198–99; 3.25, pp. 300–7; 5.2, pp. 458–59; 5.3, pp. 462–63; 5.21, pp. 538–39; and 5.21, pp. 548–53); Augustine (1.23–28, pp. 68–103; 1.29, pp. 104–5; 1.31–33, pp. 108–15; 2.2, pp. 134–35; 2.3, pp. 142–43; 2.5, pp. 148–49; 2.7, pp. 156–57; 2.18, pp. 196–97; 4.27, pp. 434–35; and 5.24, pp. 562–63); Columba (3.4, pp. 220–25; 3.25, pp. 304–7; 5.9, pp. 478–79; 5.21, pp. 550–51; and 5.24, pp. 562–63); Gregory the Great (Preface, pp. 4–5; 1.23–25, pp. 68–73; 1.27–32, pp. 78–115; 2.1, pp. 122–35; 2.3, pp. 144–45; 2.4, pp. 148–49; 2.17, pp. 194–95; 2.20, pp. 204–5; 3.29, pp. 320–21; 4.2, pp. 336–37; 4.27, pp. 434–35; 5.13, pp. 502–3; 5.19, pp. 518–19; 5.20, pp. 530–31; and 5.24, pp. 562–63); Aidan (3.3, pp. 218–21; 3.5, pp. 226–29; 3.14–17, pp. 258–67; 3.25, pp. 294–97; 3.26, pp. 308–9; 3.28,

- pp. 316–17; 4.23, pp. 406–7; 4.27, pp. 434–35; 5.22, pp. 554–55; and 5.24, pp. 564–65); Cuthbert (Preface, pp. 6–7 and 4.26–32, pp. 428–49).
118. For example, the virgin-nun Begu offers at least thirty years of dedicated service to God, *HE* 4.23, pp. 412–13. A nun named Edith dies of the plague and enters the kingdom of heaven in answer to the call of a dying boy (4.8, pp. 358–59); the nun Begu also receives a vision of Abbess Hild getting taken up to heaven (4.23, pp. 412–13); Frigyth, another nun in Hild's monastery, tells her sisters to pray for Hild after Begu's report (4.23, pp. 412–13); and an unnamed nun has a vision of Hild's ascent to heaven (4.23, pp. 414–15). The nun Torhtgyth receives a vision of the ascent to heaven of Æthelburh, her mother superior (4.9, pp. 360–61) while a second unnamed nun receives confirmation from the deceased Æthelburh that she will soon die and, with Æthelburh's intercession, is able to leave behind her physical suffering and enter heaven (4.9, pp. 362–63).
 119. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99, lines 25–54.
 120. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99, lines 27–36.
 121. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–99, line 34. For more information about Saint Æthelthryth, see Virginia Blanton, *Signs of Devotion: The Cult of St. Æthelthryth in Medieval England, 695–1615* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007).
 122. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–401, lines 37–54.
 123. *HE* 4.20, pp. 398–401, line 54.
 124. Bede records that Abbess Æbbe led the community at Coldingham, Abbess Fara founded the monastery at Brie, and Abbess Heiu was said to be the first woman to take a nun's vows in the kingdom of Northumbria and founded a monastery, *HE* 4.19, pp. 392–93; 3.8, pp. 236–37; and 4.23, pp. 406–7.
 125. *HE* 3.24, pp. 290–93.
 126. *HE* 3.24, pp. 290–93.
 127. *HE* 3.8, pp. 240–41.
 128. *HE* 4.19, pp. 392–95.
 129. *HE* 4.19, pp. 396–97.
 130. *HE* 4.19, pp. 396–97.
 131. *HE* 4.19, pp. 392–95; 4.22, pp. 404–5; and 3.8, pp. 238–39.
 132. *HE* 5.3, pp. 460–63.
 133. *HE* 3.11, pp. 246–51.
 134. *HE* 4.23, pp. 404–7.
 135. *HE* 4.23, pp. 406–15.
 136. *HE* 4.23, pp. 410–11.
 137. *HE* 3.24, pp. 292–93.
 138. *HE* 2.14, pp. 186–87; 2.3, pp. 142–43; and 2.5, pp. 152–53.
 139. *HE* 5.11, pp. 484–87; 2.9, pp. 164–65; 2.11, pp. 172–75; and 2.14, pp. 186–89.
 140. *HE* 2.13, pp. 182–87.
 141. *HE* 3.21, pp. 278–79.

142. *HE* 1.8, pp. 36–37 and 5.16, pp. 508–9.
143. *HE* 3.2, pp. 246–49 and 4.21, pp. 400–1.
144. *HE* 3.2, pp. 246–49 and 5.24, pp. 564–65.
145. *HE* 1.27, pp. 88–89.
146. In Jewish tradition, the birth of a son results in forty days of uncleanness, but the birth of a daughter in eighty days of uncleanness, Leviticus 12.1–8, *Biblia sacra Latina ex biblia sacra vulgatae editionis Sixti V. et Clementis VIII.* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons Limited, 1977). Bede's account states thirty-three days of uncleanness for a boy and sixty-six for a girl, *HE* 1.27, pp. 90–91.
147. *HE* 1.27, pp. 90–93.
148. Peggy McCracken discusses the Old French text *Jourdain de Blaye* because it “offers a rare example of the representation of women's blood, the blood of parturition, which is shown to be dangerous blood in this text” through the female character's labeling of childbirth itself as a sin, “Engendering Sacrifice: Blood, Lineage, and Infanticide in Old French Literature,” *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 77 (2002): 71–74 [55–75]; *Jourdain de Blaye*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski, rev. ed., *Les classiques français du moyen âge* 112 (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1991). Cadden notes how, “by repeating Pliny's warnings about the dangers of menstrual blood, Isidore [of Seville] gave later authors of treatises and sermons access to powerful material for their misogynistic warnings against the sexual lures of women,” *Meanings of Sex Difference*, p. 49. For other discussions of how medieval people conceived of and contained the supposed threat of women's menstrual blood, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 273–99; Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 2–7, 44, 115–16, 122, and 155; and Charles T. Wood, “The Doctors' Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought,” *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 56 (1981): 710–27.
149. *HE* 1.27, pp. 94–97.
150. Barefield notes the transfer of power “from a father to both of his sons,” “Gender and the Creation of Lineage,” 7.
151. Barefield notes that Geoffrey's book explores “how history encodes the roles women, especially mothers, play,” “Gender and the Creation of Lineage,” 7.
152. Shichtman and Finke, “Profiting from the Past,” 24 and 27.
153. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 38.
154. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp. 78 and 208.
155. Olson, “Gwendolyn and Estrildis,” 45.
156. If the Arthurian section of the *HRB* is defined as Chapters 120–178, then there are fifty female figures identified by name in its non-Arthurian portion according to Reeve and Wright's index, *HRB*, pp. 283–307.

157. McCracken, "Engendering Sacrifice," 55.
158. Barefield, "Gender and the Creation of Lineage," 5.
159. Barefield concurs that Iudon is out of her mind, accepting Lewis Thorpe's translation of *sopitus* as 'unbalanced,' "Gender and the Creation of Lineage," 5.
160. McCracken, "Engendering Sacrifice," 56 and 66.
161. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, p. 223 citing Alain de Lille, *De planctu Naturae*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring, *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 19.2 (1978), ch. 8, prose 4, lines 68–76, p. 835 and ch. 9, meter 5, lines 45–50, p. 844 [797–879]. For an English translation, see *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. and commentary by James J. Sheridan, *Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 26 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), pp. 135–36 and 152.
162. Curley notes how much space the reigns of Kings Leir and Belinus occupy, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 19.
163. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 5.
164. *HB* presents a nameless daughter of Hencgistus as first serving wine and liquor and then, after Satan enters the king's heart, becoming his much-loved wife, 37, pp. 69 and 28.
165. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 52.
166. Tolstoy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," 18–20 citing Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, pp. 67–68.
167. Tolstoy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," 18–20.
168. Tolhurst, *Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 45–53.
169. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 15.
170. Malory, *The Works*, 1.313.1–5, 2.464.19–465.15, 2.497.1–9, 2.513.5–22, and 2.983.1–33; Fiona Tolhurst, "Why Every Knight Needs His Lady: Re-viewing Questions of Genre and 'Cohesion' in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*," in *Re-viewing Le Morte Darthur: Texts and Contexts, Characters and Themes*, ed. K. S. Whetter and Raluca L. Radulescu, *Arthurian Studies* 60 (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 139–45 [133–47].
171. Heng, "Cannibalism," 133.
172. Maureen Fries, "Gender and the Grail," *Arthuriana* 8.1 (1998): 73 [67–79].
173. Heng, "Cannibalism," 138.
174. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 15.
175. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, pp. 10–12.
176. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, pp. 10 and 12.
177. Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke, UK, and London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), p. 9 citing Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, introduction to *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, *Gender and Culture Series* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 2–4 [1–11]; Kathryn Gravdal,

- Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 31.
178. Flint, "Parody and Its Purpose," 464.
 179. Entry for 'puella (n.),' *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. Charleton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879; repr. 1991), p. 1486.
 180. *Beowulf*, ed. Klaeber, lines 612b–41b, pp. 23–24 and lines 1168b–87b and 1216a–31b, pp. 44–47.
 181. *Beowulf*, ed. Klaeber, lines 632a–36a, p. 24.
 182. Most of these synchronisms in *HRB* link events in Britain to events in Troy, Greece, Italy, and the Holy Land: 22.506–9, 26.68–69, 26.84, 27.91–92, 28.113–15, 29.122–23, 30.129–30, and 32.283–85. Two other early synchronisms link King Kimbelinus to the time of Christ's birth (64.275–77) and the founding of Gloucester in honor of Gewissa, daughter of Emperor Claudius, to the apostle Peter's sending Mark the evangelist to Egypt (68.340–43).
 183. Roberta Davidson argues that several female figures in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* guide both the knights within the book and the book's readers toward correct interpretations, "Reading Like a Woman in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," *Arthuriana* 16.1 (2006): 29 [21–33].
 184. McCracken, "Engendering Sacrifice," pp. 74–75; Barefield, "Gender and the Creation of Lineage," 6.
 185. Jenny M. Jochens, "The Politics of Reproduction: Medieval Norwegian Kingship," *The American Historical Review* 92 (1987): 348 and 342 [327–49]; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, p. 272. Katie Keene offers the possibility that the author of *Le roman de Silence* assigns Norway as the homeland of Eufème, the evil queen, "deliberately...because of the generally negative perception of its royal line," "'Cherchez Eufème': The Evil Queen in *Le roman de Silence*," *Arthuriana* 14.3 (2004): 11 [3–22].
 186. Barefield, "Gender and the Creation of Lineage," 7.
 187. *AUC* 2.40.1–12; Michael A. Faletra suggests that Tonwenna "may have been inspired by the legendary Roman woman Veturia," for both figures appear "on the battlefield at the eleventh hour" to prevent a son from attacking his homeland, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. Faletra, p. 75 n1.
 188. *AUC* 2.40.1.
 189. "Sed cum hinc et inde statutae cohorts fere commisceri incepissent, acceleravit mater amborum, quae adhuc uiuebat, per dispositas turmas incedens. Erat nomen eius Tonwenna aestuabatque filium uidere quem multo tempore non aspexerat [But when the armies on one side and the other were about to begin their engagement, the mother of both men (who was still living) hastened—stepping through drawn-up troops. Her name was Tonwenna, and she was burning to see her son whom she had not beheld for a long time], *HRB* 41.126–28.
 190. *AUC* 2.40.2–3.
 191. *AUC* 2.40.3.
 192. *AUC* 2.40.3.

193. *AUC* 2.40.4.
194. *AUC* 2.40.4–5.
195. “Super his igitur quae ipsa cum fletu expresserat motus, sedato animo oboediuit et ultro deposita galea cum illa ad fratrem perrexit [Moved through these (words) that she had expressed with weeping, (Brennius) obeyed with a calm spirit and, voluntarily lifting off his helmet, proceeded with her to his brother], *HRB* 41.148–49.
196. *AUC* 2.40.5.
197. *AUC* 2.40.5–10.
198. *AUC* 2.40.9–10.
199. *AUC* 2.40.7–8.
200. *AUC* 2.40.10.
201. Geoffrey reports first that “nec mora, amici facti sunt adinuicem et cohortibus exarmatis urbem Trinouantum uenerunt. Ibi consilio coepto quid facerent parauerunt exercitum communem in Galliarum partes ducere cunctasque prouincias potestati suae submittere [without delay, they became friends mutually and, having disarmed their armies, went to the city of Trinouantum. There, having taken counsel as to what they should do, they prepared to lead a joint army to Gallic lands, and to put all those provinces under their rule],” and then that, a year later, Belinus and Brennius conquer all of France before conducting a successful military campaign in Italy that ends with the brothers’ triumph in Rome: “Urbem ceperunt et absconditas conciuum opes commilitonibus dederunt [They captured the city, and they gave the concealed wealth of its citizens to their fellow soldiers],” *HRB* 41.151–54, 43.210–11.
202. Warren, *History on the Edge*, p. 33.
203. Barefield, “Gender and the Creation of Lineage,” 4.
204. Cohen and the members of Interscripta, “Alienating Identity,” 19.
205. Carolynne Larrington, “The Enchantress, the Knight, and the Cleric: Authorial Surrogates in Arthurian Romance,” *Arthurian Literature* 25 (2008): 45–46 [43–65].
206. Bartlett, “Cracking the Penile Code,” 70–71; Alliterative *Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition*, ed. Mary Hamel (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984), lines 3250–393.
207. Lesley Johnson, “Return to Albion,” *Arthurian Literature* 13 (1995): 20 [19–40]; *Des grantz geanz: An Anglo-Norman Poem*, ed. Georgine E. Brereton, Medium Ævum Monographs 2 (Oxford: Published for the Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature by Basil Blackwell Publishing, 1937).
208. Johnson, “Return,” 26.
209. Johnson, “Return,” 24 and 26.
210. Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, p. 426; Parry and Caldwell, “Geoffrey of Monmouth,” in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Loomis, p. 86.
211. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women [De mulieribus claris]*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

212. Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ch. 2, pp. 20–23 (Semiramis); ch. 9, pp. 48–49 (Europa); ch. 32, pp. 128–31 (Penthesilea); and ch. 86, pp. 354–55 (Cornificia). Boccaccio does, however, credit women with the same intellectual capabilities as men.
213. Olson, “Gwendolyn and Estrildis,” 36.
214. Olson notes that “one of the clear virtues of Gwendolyn’s rule is the breadth of the land she controls” as well as that “Gwendolyn’s success is acknowledged when Habren’s name fixes her as a flowing river,” “Gwendolyn and Estrildis,” 41.
215. Olson argues that although Geoffrey “forgives Locrinus his seduction [of Estrildis], he is unsympathetic to his nuptial plans,” “Gwendolyn and Estrildis,” 42. Nevertheless, the *HRB*’s account does not forgive Locrinus this seduction; instead, it presents the king’s willingness to neglect his responsibilities in order to have the woman he desires as meriting overthrow, thereby treating him as it does other male rulers who are sexually and/or socially deviant such as Mempricius, who commits sodomy and murder, and Morvidus who enjoys cruelly murdering his enemies, 26.73–84 and 47.268–48.286.
216. Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6.13.36, pp. 512–15. On Matilda’s temperament, see Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility*, p. 164; Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, pp. 204–5; and GS, which claims that Matilda was haughty and cruel while presenting events in a pro-Stephen manner, 1.58, pp. 118–19; 1.60, pp. 120–23; and 2.93, pp. 178–79. Gillingham notes that Gwenllïan led troops during the Welsh revolt of 1136–37, “Context and Purposes,” 113. John Davies records that Gwenllïan died in battle, as did her husband, during a Welsh attack upon the Norman invaders, *A History of Wales* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 124.
217. Samples, “Problem Women,” 25.
218. Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 21.
219. Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 234. Shichtman and Finke categorize Cordeilla as a dutiful daughter, “Profiting from the Past,” 23.
220. *Feme sole* is a term that Charles Beem uses and defines in *The Lioness Roared*, pp. 7 and 46.
221. Here I dispute Shichtman and Finke’s claim that “the ‘love match’ has no place in this narrative [Geoffrey’s *Historia*],” “Profiting from the Past,” 23.
222. Knight tries to read Cordeilla as “a sentimentally euphemised version of Henry I” because Henry received silver rather than lands from his father and eventually became king; however, what Knight calls the “bold distorting strokes” of ideology produce a Cordeilla who, unlike Henry I, is a model of loyalty, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 48.
223. *Saenuiciae* is a word that in the *HRB* can mean ‘fierceness,’ ‘savagery,’ or ‘barbarity,’ *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. Lewis and Short, p. 1615; however, within the context of the overthrow of a worthy and effective ruler, the

- word takes on a strongly negative connotation. Furthermore, Geoffrey's other uses of the word likewise lean toward its stronger meanings: when he uses it to describe Belinus and Brennius's victory over the Romans (43.165–66), it could be translated as 'ferocity' but, given Brennius's immoderate rule over Rome, it takes on darker shades of meaning. In the case of Maximianus—who slaughters every Frenchman under his power, throws France into political chaos, and kills the two Roman emperors who earlier denied him power (85.338)—the word again takes on its most negative meaning, 'barbarity.'
224. When Knight says that Geoffrey "has no tragic end to the story" of Cordeilla, he cites the fact of her succession but does not consider her death, *Arthurian Literature*, p. 48.
 225. Henry of Huntingdon interprets Cordeilla's death as an honor suicide in his *EWB*, saying that she "se ipsam uiriliter peremit [killed herself with manly vigor]," 3.564–65.
 226. Samples, "Problem Women," 32.
 227. *HE* 5.16, pp. 508–9 and 1.8, pp. 36–37.
 228. Knight interprets Mempricius's story as "sounding like a dark portrait" of King Henry I that evolves into a portrait of William Rufus, "who was reviled for preferring men to women, especially by churchmen who used this as the justification for their real anger at his attacks on their riches," and died in a hunting accident, *Arthurian Literature*, pp. 50–51.
 229. Shwartz, "The Founding and Self-Betrayal," 40; Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, p. 220 citing Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. Adelgundis Führkötter with Angela Carlevaris, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis* 43 and 43A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1978), part 2, vision 6, ch. 78, p. 291.
 230. Good kings in this group are King Ebraucus who succeeds in battle, city-building, and procreation (fifty children) and Rud Hudibras who builds cities and uses military force to bring peace, *HRB* 27.85–108 and 29.117–120.
 231. Geoffrey lists many kings by name only (Runo, Gerontius, Catellus, Coillus, Porrex II, Cherin, Fulgenius, Eldadus, Andragius, Urianus, Eliud, Cledaucus, Clotenus, Gurgintius, Merianus, Bledudo, Cap, Oenus, Sisillius III, Arthmail, Eldol, Redion, Rederchius, Samuil Penissel, Pir, Capoir) while Bledgabred receives praise as a great singer, Cligueillus receives praise as a moderate and wise king who treats his subjects justly and fairly, and Heli receives recognition for ruling for sixty years, *HRB* 52.355–53.367.
 232. Echard, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 40. Echard explains that, unlike Geoffrey who emphasizes Constans's political incompetence, William of Rennes (writing after 1236) emphasizes instead Constans's breaking his vow that he would serve God as a monk, *Arthurian Narrative*, p. 96; William of Rennes, *Gesta regum Britannie*, published as *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth 5: Gesta regum Britannie*, ed. and trans. Neil Wright (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 129–33.

233. *Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum*, 3.391.150, my translation.
234. Cohen and the members of Interscripta, "Alienating Identity," 4.
235. Tatlock concludes that "Geoffrey could hardly end with an air of more contemptuous detachment from the Welsh," *The Legendary History*, p. 400. Brynley F. Roberts interprets Geoffrey's "scant respect" for the Welsh later in their history as indirect evidence of his possibly Breton ethnicity, "Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*," in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 98 [97–116].
236. Reeve and Wright treat them as two separate figures, 'Galaes (daughter of Ebraucus)' and 'Galaes (queen),' but they do not grant the latter a title such as queen of the Welsh, index of names *HRB*, p. 292 [282–307].
237. Johnson, "Return to Albion," 24.
238. Johnson, "Return to Albion," 21 and 23–24.

3 Undermining and Degrading Female Kingship in the First Variant and Wace's *roman de Brut*

1. In *HRB*, editor Michael D. Reeve and translator Neil Wright offer a reliable Vulgate text based on a full collation of fourteen manuscripts and a survey of all the manuscripts that preserve it. Vulgate manuscripts are far from homogeneous, as Dumville notes, "An Early Text," 27 n107.
2. Wace supplies the year in which he completed his *roman de Brut* in its closing lines, *RB* 14863–66. For discussions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's death date, see Wright, introduction to *HRB* Bern, p. x and Roberts, "Geoffrey of Monmouth," in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, ed. Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts, p. 99.
3. Bartlett, *Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 482 and 377.
4. Entry for 'translate (v.),' *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, definitions 1. a. and 2. a., accessed April 20, 2012 www.oed.com/.
5. Reeve provides these data about the manuscripts in his introduction to *HRB*, pp. x–xi. I do not examine the Second Variant here because, as Reeve notes, it occurs in only eighteen manuscripts (some of which preserve a mixture of versions) and its redactor made few changes until Chapter eighty-nine "and then without introducing new material," introduction to *HRB*, pp. x–xi.
6. Wright, introduction to *FV*, p. lxxvii [xi–cxvi].
7. Reeve, "The Transmission," 109. Wright concurs on the issues of authorship and dates: "The Variant version was not Geoffrey's source nor was it written by Geoffrey himself; it is a redaction of the vulgate text made by an unknown contemporary of Geoffrey at some time between 1138, the probable publication-date of the *Historia*, and the early 1150s—certainly no later than 1155, since the Variant version was used extensively in Wace's *roman de Brut*, which was completed in that year," introduction to *FV*, p. lxx.

8. Wright, introduction to *FV*, p. xli.
9. Wright, editor's preface to *FV*, p. viii [vii–ix]. Wright says of the Variant-redactor, "It is safest, therefore, to conclude provisionally that the redactor of the First Variant version was a writer well read in the bible and the Classics, of conventional christian piety, and with an interest in history which manifests itself in his use of Bede and Landolfus; his identity, however, remains unknown," introduction to *FV*, pp. lxxiv–lxxv. Reeve agrees that the redactor returns to some of Geoffrey's sources to insert material derived from classical and biblical sources, "The Transmission," 109.
10. Wright, editor's preface to *FV*, p. viii.
11. Leckie discusses the pro-English bias of the First Variant, *The Passage of Dominion*, pp. 106–7 while Warren discusses its combination of pro-English and pro-Welsh sentiments, *History on the Edge*, pp. 71–76.
12. Wright, introduction to *FV*, p. lxxv.
13. Wright, editor's preface to *FV*, p. viii and introduction to *FV*, pp. lxxv and lxx. Wright's edition of the *FV* superseded *Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia regum Britanniae: A Variant Version*, ed. Jacob Hammer, The Mediaeval Academy of America Publication 57 (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951).
14. Wayne Glowka interprets both the First Variant and Wace's *roman de Brut* as treating Brutus's marriage as "a business-like exchange of the woman and goods," "Masculinity, Male Sexuality, and Kingship in Wace's *roman de Brut*," in *Lazamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. Rosamund Allen, Lucy Perry, and Jane Roberts (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2002), p. 419 [413–31].
15. Wright, introduction to *FV*, p. xix.
16. Geoffrey, in contrast, associates the wedding of Gewissa not with a border but rather with the location of the city of Gloucester, "nuncupata usque in hodiernum diem in confinio Kambriae et Loegriae super ripam Sabrinae sita est [which all the way down to the present day has been located on the bank of the Severn between Wales and Loegria]," *HRB* 68.335–36.
17. Geoffrey's Vulgate version states that Octavius wants to make appropriate provisions for his subjects and has no son to whom to leave the crown; however, it neither mentions the need to maintain peace nor states explicitly that the father intends his daughter to rule after him: "Denique senio confectus, disponere populo uolens, quaesiuit a consiliariis suis quem post ipsius fata in regem de progenie sua erigere affectassent. Vnicam tantum filiam habens, filio caruerat cui regimen patriae permetteret [Finally, thoroughly defeated by old age, (and) wanting to make arrangements for his people, he asked his counselors which of his family they would desire to raise to (the position of) king after his death. Having only a single/unparalleled daughter, he lacked a son to whom he could entrust control of the country]," *HRB* 81.194–97.
18. *HRB* 82.232–73 cf. *FV* 82.1–2; *HRB* 83.274–95 cf. *FV* 83.1–2.
19. The Vulgate version of the Leir/Cordeilla story constitutes 126 lines of Chapter thirty-one but only 102 lines in the Variant version (*HRB*

- 31.134–259; *FV* 31.1–102). Similarly, Chapter thirty-two of the Vulgate contains eleven lines about Cordeilla's reign and the Variant only six (*HRB* 32.260–70; *FV* 32.1–6).
20. “Porro mater eorum, cui nomen erat Iudon, cum de nece filii certitudinem habuisset, ultra modum commota in odium alterius uersa est. Diligebat namque illum magis altero. Vnde tanta ira ob mortem ipsius ingnescebat ut ipsum in fratrem uindicare affectaret. Nacta ergo tempus quo ille sopitus fuerat, aggreditur eum cum ancillis suis et in plurimas sectiones dilacerauit. Exin ciuilis discordia multo tempore populum afflixit et regnum quinque regibus summisum est, qui sese mutuis cladibus infestabant [Then their mother (whose name was Iudon), when she had certainty concerning the death of her son, having been moved beyond measure to hatred of the other (son), was transformed. For she had loved him more than the other. Whence she was burning with great anger because of his death so that against his brother she desired to take revenge. Therefore she, finding a time at which he was sleeping, attacked him with her maidservants and tore him into many pieces. After that, civil war afflicted the people for a long time, and the realm was under the power of five kings who molested each other with mutual massacre],” *HRB* 33.298–304; cf. “Porro mater eorum nomine Iudon de morte filii commota quia arcius eum diligebat in odium et iram aduersus uictorem fratrem incitata est. Nacta ergo tempus uindicandi filium aggreditur sompno oppressum cum ancillis suis in plurimas sectiones dilacerauit. Exinde ciuilis discordia multo tempore populum afflixit et regnum quinque regibus submisum est qui sese mutuis cladibus infestabant [Then their mother named Iudon, moved by the death of her son to hatred and anger, was roused because she loved him more deeply compared with his brother. Therefore, she, finding a time to avenge her son, attacked him—weighed down with sleep—with her maidservants and tore him into many pieces. After that, civil war afflicted the people for a long time, and the realm was under the power of five kings who molested each other with mutual massacre],” *FV* 33.12–18.
 21. This revision by the Variant-redactor eliminates the awkwardness in Geoffrey's *HRB* of describing Germanus's mission at the beginning of Chapter 101 and then invoking it at the beginning of the next chapter, *HRB* 101.369–76 and 102.413–15.
 22. W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg, introduction to *LB*, p. xvii [ix–xxi].
 23. Françoise H. M. Le Saux defines the *roman de Brut*'s audience as “an aristocratic audience, and more specifically, the royal circle itself,” *A Companion to Wace* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2005), p. 82.
 24. Glyn S. Burgess, introduction to *The History of the Norman People: Wace's roman de Rou*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess with notes by Glyn S. Burgess and Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. xv–xvi [xi–xxxiv].
 25. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 82.

26. Significantly, the word *corteis* 'courtliness' also appears, a word "associated with leisure, wealth, witty and elegant conversation, style and fashion, esthetics, love, and the subordination of knightly prowess to the service of love, all of which flourish during the twelve-year period of *pax arthuriana*," Rupert T. Pickens, "Arthur's Channel Crossing: Courtesy and the Demonic in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace's *Brut*," *Arthuriana* 7.3 (1997): 4 [3–19]. In *RB*, readers can find medieval terms and details in lines 178, 317–36, 3027–48, 3527, 4346–48, 4845–49, 7704, and 10243–45; references to France in lines 793–1062, 1501–10, 1521–24, 2833–57, 3849–51, 8338, 10085–104, 10105–32, 10869–72, 10915–17, 11051–59, and 12417–28; references to place-name and regime change in lines 3762–74, 3772–84, 5567–68, 8175–78, 13657–58, and 13659–62; and references to continuity and conquest in lines 13643–52, 14719–28, and 14753–56.
27. Rupert T. Pickens, "Implications of Being 'French' in Twelfth-Century England," in "*Chançon legiere a chanter*": *Essays on Old French Literature in Honor of Samuel N. Rosenberg*, ed. Karen Fresco and Wendy Pfeffer (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, Inc., 2007), p. 383 [373–86]; Le Saux, *A Companion*, pp. 92 and 81 citing Hans-Erich Keller, *Étude descriptive sur le vocabulaire de Wace* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), p. 14; Weiss, introduction to *RB*, p. xxiii [xi–xxix].
28. Véronique Zara, "The Historical Figure of Arthur in Wace's *roman de Brut*," *Arthuriana* 18.2 (2008): 27, 19, and 23 [17–30].
29. Le Saux, *A Companion*, pp. 99, 116, and 91.
30. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 7.
31. Anderson, "Narrating Matilda," 57; Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 156.
32. Anderson, "Narrating Matilda," 48 and 59.
33. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 61.
34. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 276; van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 62.
35. Van Houts notes how Wace sets aside Empress Matilda's hereditary right, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 62 citing Wace, *Le roman de Rou*, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols. (Paris: A. & J. Picard & Co., 1970–73), 1.7.132–33.
36. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, pp. 60–61.
37. van Houts, "Latin and French," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, p. 61. Le Saux corroborates both the pro-Curthose bias of the text and King Henry II's likely frustration with Wace, *A Companion*, pp. 271 and 275–78. For Wace's pro-Curthose statements, see *Le roman de Rou*, 2.234.9375–2.235.9390 and 2.268.10319–30; for his inclusion of Henry the Young King, see 1.167.177–1.168.184, 2.84.5313–18, and 2.308.11431–38; and for his expression of resentment against King Henry II, see 2.307.11419–30.

38. Wace, *Le roman de Rou*, 2.307.11419–24.
39. van Houts, “Latin and French,” in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones, pp. 54 and 60 citing Stephen of Rouen, *The Draco Normannicus of Etienne de Rouen*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, 4 vols., Rolls Series 82 (London: Longman & Company, 1884–89), 1.10.605–7, 2.22.707, and 2.23.708 and Robert of Torigni, *The Gesta Normannorum ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols., Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992–95), 2.240–41.
40. Le Saux, *A Companion*, pp. 277–78.
41. Le Saux, *A Companion*, pp. 7–9 and 273–78.
42. Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 12–13 [1–54].
43. Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, ed. Wheeler and Parsons, p. 13.
44. Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, ed. Wheeler and Parsons, p. 14.
45. Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, ed. Wheeler and Parsons, p. 14.
46. Wace, *Le roman de Rou*, 1.3.1–1.4.42.
47. Lori J. Walters, “Reconfiguring Wace’s Round Table: Walewein and the Rise of the National Vernaculars,” *Arthuriana* 15.2 (2005): 40, 42, 44, and 48 [39–58].
48. Lori J. Walters, “Re-Examining Wace’s Round Table,” in *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 29 July–4 August 2004*, ed. Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Cambridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), pp. 721–22 [721–744] and “Wace and the Genesis of Vernacular Authority,” in “*Li premerains vers*”: *Essays in Honor of Keith Busby*, ed. Catherine M. Jones and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), p. 508 [507–16].
49. Walters, “Genesis of Vernacular Authority,” in “*Li premerains vers*,” ed. Jones and Whalen, p. 514.
50. RB 9655; Walters, “Re-Examining Wace’s Round Table,” in *Courtly Arts*, ed. Busby and Kleinhenz, p. 739. Peggy McCracken discusses these rumors about Eleanor’s conduct, “Scandalizing Desire: Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Chroniclers,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 248–55 [247–63].
51. Burgess, introduction to *The History of the Norman People*, pp. xxxiii and xv.
52. Le Saux, *A Companion*, pp. 4, 9, 11, 8, 116, and 99.

53. According to Wright, Wace possessed a version of the First Variant that was more complete than what is now extant, introduction to *FV*, p. civ. Although it is unknown what proportion of Wace's material derives from this lost version of Geoffrey's history and what proportion he creates, the following analysis credits Wace with elements not found in either the Vulgate or the extant First Variant version of Geoffrey's history.
54. All English translations of subsequent passages in Wace's *roman de Brut* are taken from Judith Weiss's edition and translation of the *RB*.
55. "Quo uita discedente regnum suscepit Ascanius qui et Iulus eiusdem filius erat; quem apud Troiam ex Creusa filia Priami regis genuerat et secum in Ytaliā ueniens adduxerat [With the departure of his (Eneas's) life, it was Ascanius who received the kingdom, and Iulus was the son of the same man; (Eneas) begot him near Troy upon Creusa, the daughter of Priam, and led him away with him, coming to Italy]," *FV* 6.6–8.
56. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 12.
57. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 122.
58. Catty, *Writing Rape*, p. 87.
59. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 118.
60. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 120.
61. Weiss, *RB*, p. 355 n2.
62. The Variant-redactor does not substantially alter the reign of Tonwenna's husband Dunuallo Molmutius, but he condenses Geoffrey's account of Tonwenna's intervention, *FV* 34.1–32 and 41.1–32.
63. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 113.
64. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 15.
65. Laȝamon emphasizes the duke of Burgundy's lack of a male heir in a similar manner: "ƿe duc hauede æne dohter ƿe him wes swiȝe deore; / ah he neuede nenne sune; ƿerfore he wes sari [The duke had a daughter who was most dear to him, but he had no son, which saddened him]," *LB* 2448–49.
66. The Variant-redactor condenses Guendoloena's story but does not alter its essential content, *FV* 25.1–17.
67. Olson says of Wace's Estrildis story that he "moves through this section quickly to focus on the consequences of Locrinus' choices," but she does not discuss how Wace transforms the story, "Gwendolyn and Estrildis," 43.
68. Corineüs's comment about Locrin having promised to marry his daughter builds upon Geoffrey of Monmouth's narration: "Locrinus pactus fuerat sese filiam ipsius ducturum [Locrinus had made a promise to marry his daughter]," *HRB* 24.28–29.
69. Le Saux, *A Companion*, p. 100.
70. The First Variant retains Helena's roles as her father's heir and as Constantinus's mother, and it then mentions Helena as related to her uncles before defining her as the mother of Constantinus I, *FV* 78.15–21, 80.4, and 159.22.

4 Delegitimizing and Erasing Female Kingship in the “*Epistola Warino Britoni*,” the *Chronica majora*, and *Lazamon’s Brut*

1. Greenway, introduction to *Historia Anglorum*, pp. xxiv–xxvii and lx; Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, pp. 11–14; Björn Weiler, “Matthew Paris on the Writing of History,” *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009): 257 [254–78].
2. For details about Henry of Huntingdon’s departures from the *HRB*, see Greenway’s notes to *EWB* 1–10, pp. 558–83; Wright, introduction to *FV*, p. lxxi.
3. Greenway, introduction to *Historia Anglorum*, p. ci.
4. Greenway, introduction to *Historia Anglorum*, p. ci.
5. Henry of Huntingdon’s “*Epistola Regi Henrico*,” a text occupying over twenty-five pages in its modern edition, mentions only three historical women: the prophetess Deborah who, with the tribal chief named Barak, rules the Hebrews “*animo et exercitio uirili* [with spirit and manly proficiency]” (16.508–9); Cleopatra who reigns for twenty-two years (78.528–29); and Empress Matilda, who is mentioned only as the daughter of King Henry I whom the Holy Roman Emperor marries—thereby gaining possession of a huge dowry (175.554–55), in *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), Book viii, pp. 502–57.
6. Greenway notes that *EWB* 3 quotes Proverbs 3.15, p. 563 n35.
7. Greenway’s translation of this sentence, “And when they had defeated and killed the wicked dukes, she restored her father to the kingdom in triumph,” is reasonable given the mention of Cordeilla’s traveling to Britain with her husband, but the singular verb *restituit* ‘restored’ makes it possible that Cordeilla defeats the dukes and returns her father to the throne, *EWB* 3.565.
8. Gransden views Geoffrey as problematic both because “the way Geoffrey treats his known sources corroborates the view that he was capable of intellectual dishonesty” and because he tells “romantic stories”; consequently, she concludes, “Unlike the reputable historians of the day he had no moral, edifying purpose, and no interest in recording historical facts,” *Historical Writing*, pp. 203–4.
9. Richard Vaughan, introduction to *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life*, by Matthew Paris, trans., ed., and with an introduction by Richard Vaughan (Cambridge, UK: The University Press, 1958), p. xii [vii–xiii].
10. Weiler, “Matthew Paris,” 257.
11. Weiler, “Matthew Paris,” 259.
12. “*Rex igitur ignarus quid ageret, deliberavit tandem filias suas adire, quibus regnum diviserat, ut si fieri posset, sibi dum viveret, et xl. militibus suis stipendia ministrarent. Quae cum indignatione verbum ex ore ipsius rapi- entes, dixerunt eum senem esse, delirum, et mendicum, nec tanta familia*

dignum. Sed si vellet, relictis caeteris cum solo milite remaneret [Then the king, ignorant of what might happen, decided after some time to approach his daughters (between whom he had divided the kingdom) in order (to ask) whether it could be done that, while he was alive, they would supply his knights with wages. Indignantly/angrily seizing upon the words from his mouth, they said he was old, crazy, and beggarly and was not worthy of such a large household. But if he wished, he could remain—having left behind the rest—with one knight],” *CM* 1:32.

13. “Hi itaque, cum post obitum patrum in ducatibus eisdem successissent, indignati sunt Britanniam potestati foeminae subditam esse. Collectis ergo exercitibus, in reginam surrexerunt, nec saevitiae suae desistere voluerunt, donec quibusque provinciis vastatis, praelia cum ipsa commiserunt [And so when, after their fathers’ deaths, (Marganus and Cunedagius) had succeeded them in their titles, they became indignant that Britain was subjected to the rule of a woman. Therefore, having amassed armies, they rebelled against the queen, and they would not stop their savagery until they, having laid waste to various provinces, engaged with her in pitched battles],” *CM* 1:33. Paris, however, makes Geoffrey’s *gubernaculum* plural, *HRB* 31.256; *CM* 1:32.
14. “Circa eadem tempora obiit maxima mulierum, venerabilis domina Matildis, filia regis Anglorum Henrici primi, imperatrix et uxor Henrici Romanorum impertoris, et mater Henrici secundi Anglorum regis maximi [About this time died the greatest of women, the venerable lady Matilda, daughter of King Henry I of the English, empress and wife of emperor Henry of the Romans, and mother of Henry II, greatest king of the English],” *CM* 2:324.
15. “Alienora, quia praeter alia adulteria etiam Sarracenis commiscebatur, aquila quia rapax et regalis [Eleanor, in as much as—besides other acts of adultery—she was intimate even with Saracens, (is) just like the eagle, insatiable and regal],” *CM* 1:206. Paris also discusses Eleanor’s role on the Second Crusade and her divorce, *CM* 2:182 and 2:186.
16. Weiler, “Matthew Paris,” 263.
17. Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 359 and 202.
18. Scholars are certain that *Lazamon* wrote after 1155, for he translates Wace’s *RB* that was completed in 1155, and fairly certain that he wrote before 1215 because his poem does not reflect the precepts of the Fourth Lateran Council. Barron and Weinberg explain that the past-tense reference to Eleanor as Henry’s queen could indicate that the poem was written either after Henry II’s death in 1189 or after Eleanor of Aquitaine’s death in 1204, introduction to *LB*, p. xi. For other discussions of the problem of dating the poem, see Frederic Madden, preface to *Layamon’s Brut or Chronicle of Britain*, ed. Frederic Madden (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1847), pp. xx–xxi and Elizabeth J. Bryan, *Collaborative Meaning in Medieval Scribal Culture: The Otho Lazamon* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 47–49. For an example of a reading of the poem grounded in particular historical events, see Rosamund Allen,

- "*Eorles* and *Beornes*: Contextualizing Lawman's *Brut*," *Arthuriana* 8.3 (1998): 4–6 [4–22]. Rosamund Allen argues that the *Brut*'s audience was likely a mixture of those with knowledge of French and Latin literature, those with knowledge late Anglo-Saxon homilies and saints' lives (perhaps clerics), and those who lacked literary training and sophistication but could "respond on the level of realistic detail and acquire sophistication in narrative techniques as they read," "The Implied Audience of *Lazamon's Brut*," in *The Text and Tradition of Lazamon's Brut*, ed. Françoise H. M. Le Saux, *Arthurian Studies* 33 (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1994), p. 129 [121–39].
19. For information about *Lazamon's* sources other than Wace's *roman de Brut*, see P. J. Frankis on borrowings from Ælfric, "Lazamon's English Sources," *J. R. R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller, Essays in Memoriam*, ed. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 64–75; Tatlock on borrowings from Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Legendary History*, p. 490; and Françoise H. M. Le Saux on borrowings from Welsh sources, *Lazamon's Brut: The Poem and Its Sources* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 118–54. For a study of the *Brut* in relation to its many sources, see Le Saux, *The Poem and Its Sources*. Elizabeth Solopova has interpreted *Lazamon's* verse as "seem[ing] to support the view that at least some Middle English alliterative poetry was a result of a learned imitation of Old English verse" and reflecting Old English verse "as a stylistic influence among several others," "English Poetry of the Reign of Henry II," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones, *The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 193 and 197 [187–204]. The interpretive challenge that the *Caligula* and *Otho* manuscripts pose has been articulated by many scholars, among them N. R. Ker, introduction to "*The Owl and the Nightingale*": *Reproduced in Facsimile from the Surviving Manuscripts Jesus College Oxford 29 and British Museum Cotton Caligula A.IX*, EETS o.s. 251 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. ix [ix–xx] and Bryan, *Collaborative Meaning*, pp. 47–48. For studies of the two manuscripts, see Bryan's *Collaborative Meaning* and Lucy Perry, "Origins and Originality: Reading Lawman's *Brut* and the Rejection of British Library MS Cotton Otho C.xiii," *Arthuriana* 10.2 (2000): 66–84.
 20. Recent studies of *LB's* links with Old English literature include S. K. Brehe, "'Rhythmical Alliteration': Ælfric's Prose and the Origins of *Lazamon's* Meter," in *The Text and Tradition of Lazamon's Brut*, ed. Françoise H. M. Le Saux, *Arthurian Studies* 33 (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 64–87; Eric Stanley, "The Scansion of *Lazamon's Brut*: A Historical Sketch," *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009): 175–86; and Jonathan Watson, "Affective Poetics and Scribal Reperformance in Lawman's *Brut*: A Comparison of the *Caligula* and *Otho* Versions," *Arthuriana* 8.3 (1998): 62–75.
 21. Maureen Fries, "Women, Power, and (the Undermining of) Order in Lawman's *Brut*," *Arthuriana* 8.3 (1998): 27–28 [23–31].

22. Françoise H. M. Le Saux, "Relations familiales et autorité royale: de l'*Historia regum Britanniae* au *Brut* de Layamon," *Senefiance* 26 (*Les relations de parenté dans le monde médiéval*) (1989): 225–27 [217–31].
23. E. M. O'Sharkey, "King Arthur's Prophetic Dreams and the Role of Modred in Layamon's *Brut* and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," *Romania* 99 (1978): 353 [347–62].
24. Rosamund Allen, "Female Perspectives in Romance and History," in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 137 and 140–41 [133–47].
25. Marie-Françoise Alamichel, "The Function and Activities of Women in Laȝamon's *Brut*," in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, ed. Juliette Dor (Liège: University of Liège, 1992), p. 11 [11–22].
26. Paleographical analysis confirms that these two manuscripts derive from a common version of the poem that was not the author's original copy, and they preserve redactions that differ significantly in content, Bryan, *Collaborative Meaning*, pp. 47–48. For the Otho text, see Laȝamon, *Brut*, ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, 2 vols., Early English Text Society 250 and 277 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, 1978).
27. Elizabeth J. Bryan, "Laȝamon's Four Helens: Female Figurations of Nation in the *Brut*," *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 26 (1995): 71–72 [63–78].
28. Geoffrey of Monmouth identifies Galaes as a daughter of King Ebraucus who is the most beautiful woman in Britain or Gaul of her time, *HRB* 27.103–4. Nevertheless, at the end of his book, he mentions a Queen Galaes as one of three possible origins of the name 'the Welsh' (the other two being the leader Gualo and the cultural decline of the Britons until they are unworthy of their former name), *HRB* 207.593–94. Wace, like both Geoffrey and the Variant-redactor, calls this daughter of Ebrauc the most beautiful of the king's thirty daughters, *FV* 27.20; *RB* 1561–62. However, Wace simplifies the reference to Queen Galaes, saying that the name 'Wales' comes either from Duke Gualo, ruler of Wales, or from this queen while the Variant-redactor follows Geoffrey, *FV* 207.7–9; *RB* 14855–58.
29. Allen, "*Eorles* and *Beornes*," 4.
30. Kenneth J. Tiller, *Laȝamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 12.
31. For the gory deaths of individual warriors, see the vivid spilling of Numbert of Poitou's brains (*RB* 832–34; *LB* 735–36), Paschent's death in battle (*RB* 8355; *LB* 9027–29), Beduer's death by lance (*RB* 12627–34; *LB* 13750–56), and the bloody ends of several of Arður's enemies that Laȝamon either adds to the narrative he inherited (*LB* 10596, 10671–89) or makes more violent than in the French poem (*RB* 10085–90; *LB* 11966–67). For the terrible death of a king, see the example of Morpidus whom a monster bites in half after it disembowels his horse (*RB* 3441–51; *LB* 3238–45). For examples of mass slaughter as the poem's aesthetic, see *LB* 409–11, 2587–88, 9141, 13966–68, and 14263–65.

32. Kenneth J. Tiller, "The Truth 'bi Arðure þan kinge': Arthur's Role in Shaping Lawman's Vision of History," *Arthuriana* 10.2 (2000): 42 [27–49].
33. Kelley M. Wickham-Crowley, "'Going Native': Anthropological Lawman," *Arthuriana* 10.2 (2000): 12 [5–26]; Le Saux, *The Poem and Its Sources*, p. 31.
34. Laʒamon condemns pagan divination with the same severity when it reveals that Brutus will kill his parents: "Þe Scucke wes bitweonen! [The Devil was among them!]," *LB* 140 cf. *HRB* 6.55–59 and *RB* 118–28.
35. Barron and Weinberg highlight the fact that "Laʒamon's elaboration, turning an abduction into an actual rape and adding a personal impetus to Brien's patriotic motivation, helps to alienate the reader and heighten anti-Saxon feeling," *LB*, second note for p. 781 on p. 893.
36. Entry for 'strenen (v),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 2. (a) and 2. (c), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
37. Lawman, *Brut*, trans. with introduction and notes by Rosamund Allen (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1992), p. 203 and note for line 7855, p. 476.
38. Entry for 'prat(te)-wrenche (n),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definition 1, accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
39. Entry for 'sorweful (adj),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 1. (a), 4. (a), and 3. (b), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>. The *MED* does not credit Laʒamon with using the word in sense 3, but this sense fits well with his demonization of Iudon.
40. Arthur C. L. Brown notes both that the drowning of Iudon is Laʒamon's addition to the story and that this manner of execution "is in agreement with Welsh tradition," "Welsh Traditions in Layamon's *Brut*," *Modern Philology* 1 (1903): 97 [95–103].
41. Entry for 'thing (n),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 4. (c) and 2. (d), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
42. *HRB* 100.357–60; *RB* 6989–92; *LB* 7169–71.
43. Wickham-Crowley, "Going Native," 15–16.
44. Carolyn VanDyke Friedlander notes that Laʒamon omits the rebellion of Leir's sons-in-law although she interprets this omission as "compound[ing] the king's folly" by making him appear "to surrender his realm voluntarily," "The First English Story of King Lear: Layamon's *Brut*, Lines 1448–1887," *Allegorica: Texts and Documents for the Study of Medieval and Renaissance Literature* 3 (1978): 44 [42–76].
45. Marie-Françoise Alamichel, "Lawamon et Shakespeare: De Leir à Lear," *Études anglaises* 45 (1992): 167–68 [162–76].
46. Entry for 'ihwer (adv),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definition 1, accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
47. Entry for 'richedom(e) (n),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 1. (a) and 1. (b), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
48. Le Saux notes how Tonuene suggests that Brennes verges on patricide and matricide, "Relations familiales," 223.

49. Entry for 'maiden (n.),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 1. (a) and 1. (d), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
50. Entry for 'bitechen (v.),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definition 2. (a), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
51. Olson refers to the cave's furnishings as Locrin's "efforts in home-decorating," but the *Brut*'s narration does not define this space in positive terms, "Gwendolyn and Estrildis," 43.
52. Olson, "Gwendolyn and Estrildis," 48.
53. Wickham-Crowley, "'Going Native,'" 15.
54. Entry for 'shonden (v.),' *Middle English Dictionary*, definitions 1. (a), 1. (b), and 1. (c), accessed May 28, 2012 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
55. Fries, "Female Heroes," in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Slocum, p. 15.

Conclusion

1. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Jean le Fèvre's *Livre de Leesce*: Praise or Blame of Women?," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 69 (1994): 705 [705–25].
2. Fries, "Gender and the Grail," 68.
3. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 178.

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Note: Characters that appear in the HRB are listed under their Galfridian names, except for several Arthurian characters (Arthur, Bedivere, Guenevere, Merlin, Morgan le Fay, Mordred), which are listed under the most common modern spelling of their names. Texts are listed under their original titles.

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